

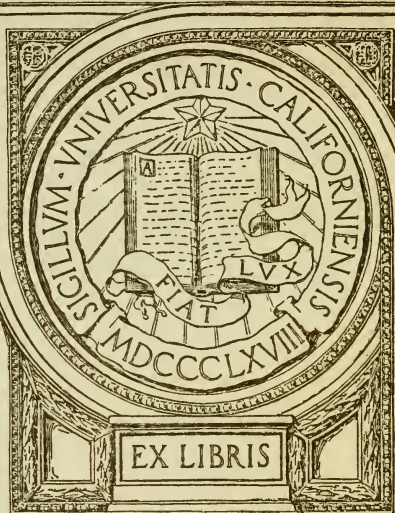
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ELEGANT EPISTLES
FROM THE
MOST EMINENT
WRITERS,
BOOK VI. PART I.
RECENT.



Design by H. Corbould.

Page 20.

Engraved by J. Romney.

LONDON,
PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHEARPE,
PICCADILLY.
& HECTOR M^r LEAN,
16. Salisbury Street, Strand.



ELEGANT EPISTLES:

BEING A

COPIOUS SELECTION

OF

INSTRUCTIVE, MORAL, AND ENTERTAINING

LETTERS,

FROM THE MOST EMINENT

EPISTOLARY WRITERS.



VOLUME VI.



BOOK XI. XII.

RECENT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN SHARPE, PICCADILLY, AND
HECTOR Mc'LEAN, 16, SALISBURY STREET,
STRAND.

1431

Plumtree and Brewis, Printers, Love Lane, Eastcheap.

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ELEGANT EPISTLES.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

Recent.

PART I.

LETTER I.

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. ELPHINSTON*.

DEAR SIR,

Sept. 25, 1750.

You have as I find, by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother, and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother now eighty-two years of age, whom therefore I must soon lose, unless it please God that she rather should mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother's death to Mr.

* Translator of Martial, Bossuet, &c. and formerly master of an academy at Kensington.

Strahan ; and think I do myself honour when I tell you that I read them with tears ; but tears are neither to me nor to you of any further use, when once the tribute of nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and incite, and elevate his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death : a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent ; and a death resigned, peaceful, and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts : and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is indeed of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God : yet surely there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal ; and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that union which has received the divine approbation, shall continue to eternity.

There is one expedient, by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of sooth-

ing recollection, when time shall remove her yet further from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come : for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you, by dear sir, your, &c.

LETTER II.

DR JOHNSON TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

MY LORD,

February, 1755.

I HAVE been lately informed, by the proprietor of The World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address ; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre* ; —that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending ; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that

I could ; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance*, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind : but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it † ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron,

* The following note is subjoined by Mr. Langton.—Dr. Johnson, when he gave me this copy of his letter, desired that I would annex to it his information to me, that whereas it is said in the letter that ‘ no assistance has been received,’ he did once receive from lord Chesterfield the sum of ten pounds ; but as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought the mention of it could not properly find place in a letter of the kind that this was.

† In this passage Dr. Johnson evidently alludes to the loss of his wife.

which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less ; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my lord, your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant.

LETTER III.

DR. JOHNSON TO MISS BOOTHBY.

DEAR MADAM,

Dec. 30, 1755.

It is again midnight, and I am again alone. With what meditation shall I amuse this waste hour of darkness and vacuity ? If I turn my thoughts upon myself, what do I perceive but a poor helpless being, reduced by a blast of wind to weakness and misery ? How my present distemper was brought upon me I can give no account, but impute it to some sudden succession of cold to heat ; such as in the common road of life cannot be avoided, and against which no precaution can be taken.

Of the fallaciousness of hope, and the uncertainty of schemes, every day gives some new proofs ; but it is seldom heeded, till something rather felt than seen, awakens attention. This illness, in which I have suffered something and feared much more, has depressed my confidence and elation ; and made me consider all that I have

promised myself, as less certain to be attained or enjoyed. I have endeavoured to form resolutions of a better life ; but I form them weakly, under the consciousness of an external motive. Not that I conceive a time of sickness a time improper for recollection and good purposes, which I believe diseases and calamities often sent to produce, but because no man can know how little his performance will answer to his promises ; and designs are nothing in human eyes till they are realized by execution.

Continue, my dearest, your prayers for me that no good resolution may be vain. You think, I believe, better of me than I deserve. I hope to be in time what I wish to be ; and what I have hitherto satisfied myself too readily with only wishing.

Your billet brought me what I much wished to have, a proof that I am still remembered by you at the hour in which I most desire it.

The doctor is anxious about you. He thinks you too negligent of yourself ; if you will promise to be cautious I will exchange promises, as we have already exchanged injunctions. However, do not write to me more than you can easily bear ; do not interrupt your ease to write at all.

Mr. Fitzherbert sent to-day to offer me some wine ; the people about me say I ought to accept it ; I shall therefore be obliged to him if he will send me a bottle.

There has gone about a report that I died to-day, which I mention, lest you should hear it and be alarmed. You see that I think my death may alarm you ; which for me is to think very highly

of earthly friendship. I believe it arose from the death of one of my neighbours. You know Des Cartes's argument. "I think, therefore I am." It is as good a consequence, "I write, therefore I am alive." I might give another, "I am alive, therefore I love miss Boothby;" but that I hope our friendship may be of far longer duration than life. I am, dearest madam, with sincere affection, yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

DR. JOHNSON TO JOSEPH BARETTI.

SIR,

Dec. 21, 1762.

You are not to suppose, with all your conviction of my idleness, that I have passed all this time without writing to my Baretti. I gave a letter to Mr. Beauclerk, who, in my opinion and in his own, was hastening to Naples for the recovery of his health; but he has stopped at Paris, and I know not when he will proceed. Langton is with him.

I will not trouble you with speculations about peace and war. The good or ill success of battles and embassies extends itself to a very small part of domestic life; we all have good and evil, which we feel more sensibly than our petty part of public miscarriage or prosperity. I am sorry for your disappointment, with which you seem more touched than I should expect a man of your resolution and experience to have been, did I not know that general truths are seldom applied to particular occa-

sions; and that the fallacy of our self-love extends itself as wide as our interest or affections. Every man believes that mistresses are unfaithful, and patrons capricious; but he excepts his own mistress and his own patron. We have all learned that greatness is negligent and contemptuous, and that in courts, life is often languished away in ungratified expectation; but he that approaches greatness, or glitters in a court, imagines that destiny has at last exempted him from the common lot.

Do not let such evils overwhelm you as thousands have suffered and thousands have surmounted; but turn your thoughts with vigour to some other plan of life; and keep always in your mind, that, with due submission to Providence, a man of genius has been seldom ruined but by himself. Your patron's weakness or insensibility will finally do you little hurt, if he is not assisted by your own passions. Of your love I know not the propriety, nor can estimate the power; but in love, as in every other passion of which hope is the essence, we ought always to remember the uncertainty of events. There is indeed nothing that so much seduces reason from her vigilance, as the thought of passing life with an amiable woman; and if all would happen that a lover fancies, I know not what other terrestrial happiness would deserve pursuit. But love and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together, and to suffer often for the sake of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look and that benevolence of mind which arose from the participation of unmingled pleasure and successive amusement. A

woman we are sure will not be always fair ; we are not sure she will always be virtuous ; and man cannot retain through life that respect and assiduity by which he pleases for a day or for a month. I do not however pretend to have discovered that life has any thing more to be desired than a prudent and virtuous marriage ; therefore know not what counsel to give you.

If you can quit your imagination of love and greatness, and leave your hopes of preferment and bridal raptures, to try once more the fortune of literature and industry, the way through France is now open. We flatter ourselves that we shall cultivate with great diligence the arts of peace ; and every man will be welcome among us who can teach us any thing we do not know. For your part, you will find all your old friends willing to receive you.

Reynolds still continues to increase in reputation and in riches. Miss Williams, who very much loves you, goes on in the old way. Miss Cotterel is still with Mrs. Porter. Miss Charlotte is married to Dean Lewis, and has three children. Mr. Levet has married a street-walker. But the gazette of my narration must now arrive to tell you, that Bathurst went physician to the army, and died at the Havannah.

I know not whether I had not sent you word that Huggins and Richardson are both dead. When we see our enemies and friends gliding away before us, let us not forget that we are subject to the general law of mortality, and shall soon be where our doom will be fixed for ever. I pray

God to bless you, and am, sir, your most affectionate humble servant, &c.

Write soon.

LETTER V.

DR. JOHNSON A MR. BOSWELL,
à la Cour de l'Empereur, Utrecht.

DEAR SIR,

London, Dec. 8, 1763.

YOU are not to think yourself forgotten, or criminally neglected, that you have had yet no letter from me. I love to see my friends, to hear from them, to talk to them, and to talk of them; but it is not without a considerable effort of resolution that I prevail upon myself to write. I would not, however, gratify my own indolence by the omission of any important duty, or any office of real kindness.

To tell you that I am or am not well, that I have or have not been in the country, that I drank your health in the room in which we sat last together, and that your acquaintance continue to speak of you with their former kindness, topics with which those letters are commonly filled which are written only for the sake of writing, I seldom shall think worth communicating; but if I can have it in my power to calm any harassing disquiet, to excite any virtuous desire, to rectify any important opinion, or fortify any generous resolution, you need not doubt but I shall at least wish to prefer the pleasure of gratifying a friend much less es-

teemed than yourself before the gloomy calm of idle vacancy. Whether I shall easily arrive at an exact punctuality of correspondence, I cannot tell. I shall, at present, expect that you will receive this in return for two which I have had from you. The first, indeed, gave me an account so hopeless of the state of your mind, that it hardly admitted or deserved an answer; by the second I was much better pleased: and the pleasure will still be increased by such a narrative of the progress of your studies, as may evince the continuance of an equal and rational application of your mind to some useful inquiry.

You will, perhaps, wish to ask, what study I would recommend. I shall not speak of theology, because it ought not to be considered as a question whether you shall endeavour to know the will of God.

I shall, therefore, consider only such studies as we are at liberty to pursue or to neglect; and of these I know not how you will make a better choice, than by studying the civil law, as your father advises, and the ancient languages, as you had determined for yourself: at least resolve, while you remain in any settled residence, to spend a certain number of hours every day amongst your books. The dissipation of thought, of which you complain, is nothing more than the vacillation of a mind suspended between different motives, and changing its direction as any motive gains or loses strength. If you can but kindle in your mind any strong desire, if you can but keep predominant any wish for some particular excellence or attainment, the gusts of imagination will break

away, without any effect upon your conduct, and commonly without any traces left upon the memory.

There lurks, perhaps, in every human heart a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that nature has given him something peculiar to himself. This vanity makes one mind nurse aversions, and another actuate desires, till they rise by art much above their original state of power; and as affection in time improves to habit, they at last tyrannize over him who at first encouraged them only for show. Every desire is a viper in the bosom, who, while he was chill, was harmless; but when warmth gave him strength, exerted it in poison. You know a gentleman, who, when first he set his foot in the gay world, as he prepared himself to whirl in the vortex of pleasure, imagined a total indifference and universal negligence to be the most agreeable concomitants of youth, and the strongest indication of an airy temper and a quick apprehension. Vacant to every object, and sensible of every impulse, he thought that all appearance of diligence would deduct something from the reputation of genius: and hoped that he should appear to attain, amidst all the ease of carelessness, and the tumult of diversion, that knowledge and those accomplishments which mortals of the common fabric obtain only by a mute abstraction and solitary drudgery. He tried this scheme of life a while, was made weary of it by his sense and his virtue, he then wished to return to his studies; and finding long habits of idleness and pleasure harder to be cured than he expected, still willing to retain his claim

to some extraordinary prerogatives, resolved the common consequences of irregularity into an unalterable degree of destiny, and concluded that nature had originally formed him incapable of rational employment.

Let all such fancies, illusive and destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts forever.

Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study to-morrow; not that you are to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted; but let no accidental surprise or deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incident to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavour to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before.

This, my dear Boswell, is advice which, perhaps, has been often given you, and given you without effect. But this advice, if you will not take from others, you must take from your own reflections, if you purpose to do the duties of the station to which the bounty of Providence has called you.

Let me have a long letter from you as soon as you can. I hope you continue your journal, and enrich it with many observations upon the country in which you reside. It will be a favour if you can get me any books in the Frisick language, and can inquire how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces. I am, dear sir, your most affectionate servant,

LETTER VI.

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. JAMES MACPHERSON.

MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,

I RECEIVED your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel: and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reason to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

LETTER VII.

DR. JOHNSON TO —————

DEAR SIR,

Bolt-court, Aug. 30, 1780.

NOT many days ago Dr. L. showed me a letter, in which you make kind mention of me: I hope, therefore, you will not be displeased that I endeavour to preserve your good-will by some observations which your letter suggested to me.

You are afraid of falling into some improprieties in the daily service, by reading to an audience that requires no exactness. Your fear, I hope, secures you from danger. They who contract absurd habits, are such as have no fear. It is impossible to do the same thing very often without some peculiarity of manner; but that manner may be good or bad, and a little care will at least preserve it from being bad; to make it very good, there must, I think, be something of natural or casual felicity which cannot be taught.

Your present method of making your sermons seems very judicious. Few frequent preachers can be supposed to have sermons more their own than yours will be. Take care to register somewhere or other the authors from whom your several discourses are borrowed; and do not imagine that you shall always remember even what perhaps you now think impossible to forget.

My advice however is, that you attempt from time to time an original sermon, and in the labour of composition do not burden your mind with too much at once; do not exact from yourself at one effort of excogitation propriety of thought and elegance of expression. Invent first, and then embellish. The production of something, where nothing was before, is an act of greater energy than the expansion or decoration of the thing produced. Set down diligently your thoughts as they rise in the first words that occur, and when you have matter you will easily give it form; nor perhaps will this method be always necessary, for by habit your thoughts and diction will flow together.

The composition of sermons is not very difficult; the divisions not only help the memory of the hearer, but direct the judgment of the writer; they supply sources of invention, and keep every part to its proper place.

What I like least in your letter is your account of the manners of the parish; from which I gather that it has been long neglected by the parson. The dean of Carlisle*, who was then a little rector in Northamptonshire, told me that it might be discerned whether or no there was a clergyman resident in a parish, by the civil or savage manners of the people. Such a congregation as yours stand in much need of reformation; and I would not have you think it impossible to reform them. A very savage parish was civilized by a decayed gentlewoman, who came among them to teach a petty school. My learned friend, Dr. Wheeler, of Oxford, when he was a young man, had the care of a neighbouring parish for fifteen pounds a year, which he was never paid; but he counted it a convenience that it compelled him to make a sermon weekly. One woman he could not bring to the communion; and when he reproved or exhorted her, she only answered that she was no scholar. He was advised to set some good woman or man of the parish, a little wiser than herself, to talk to her in language level to her mind. Such honest, I may call them holy artifices, must be practised by every clergyman, for all means must be tried by which souls may be saved. Talk to your people, however, as much as you can,

* Afterwards bishop of Dromore.

and you will find that the more frequently you converse with them upon religious subjects, the more willingly they will attend, and the more submissively they will learn. A clergyman's diligence always makes him venerable. I think I have now only to say, that in the momentous work that you have undertaken I pray God to bless you. I am, sir, your most humble servant.

LETTER VIII.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE,

On the Death of Mr. Thrale.

DEAREST MADAM,

London, April 5, 1781.

OF your injunctions to pray for you and write to you, I hope to leave neither unobserved; and I hope to find you willing in a short time to alleviate your trouble by some other exercise of the mind. I am not without my part of the calamity. No death since that of my wife has ever oppressed me like this. But let us remember, that we are in the hands of Him who knows when to give and when to take away; who will look upon us with mercy through all our variations of existence, and who invites us to call on him in the day of trouble. Call upon him in this great revolution of life, and call with confidence. You will then find comfort for the past, and support for the future. He that has given you happiness in marriage, to a degree of which, without personal knowledge, I should have thought the description fabulous, can give you ano-

ther mode of happiness as a mother; and at last, the happiness of losing all temporal cares in the thoughts of an eternity in heaven.

I do not exhort you to reason yourself into tranquillity. We must first pray, and then labour; first implore the blessing of God, and then use those means which he puts into our hands. Cultivated ground has few weeds; a mind occupied by lawful business has little room for useless regret.

We read the will to-day: but I will not fill my first letter with any other account than that, with all my zeal for your advantage, I am satisfied: and that the other executors, more used to consider property than I, commended it for wisdom and equity. Yet why should I not tell you that you have five hundred pounds for your immediate expenses, and two thousand pounds a year, with both the houses and all the goods?

Let us pray for one another, that the time, whether long or short, that shall yet be granted us, may be well spent; and that when this life, which at the longest is very short, shall come to an end, a better may begin which shall never end. I am, dearest madam, your, &c.



LETTER IX.

DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

London, June 3, 1782.

THE earnestness and tenderness of your letter is such, that I cannot think myself showing it more

respect than it claims by sitting down to answer it the day on which I received it.

This year has afflicted me with a very irksome and severe disorder. My respiration has been much impeded, and much blood has been taken away. I am now harassed by a catarrhus cough, from which my purpose is to seek relief by change of air; and I am, therefore, preparing to go to Oxford.

Whether I did right in dissuading you from coming to London this spring, I will not determine. You have not lost much by missing my company; I have scarcely been well for a single week. I might have received comfort from your kindness; but you would have seen me afflicted, and, perhaps, found me peevish. Whatever might have been your pleasure or mine, I know not how I could have honestly advised you to come hither with borrowed money. Do not accustom yourself to consider debt only as an inconvenience: you will find it a calamity. Poverty takes away so many means of doing good, and produces so much inability to resist evil, both natural and moral, that it is by all virtuous means to be avoided. Consider a man whose fortune is very narrow; whatever be his rank by birth, or whatever his reputation by intellectual excellence, what good can he do? or what evil can he prevent? That he cannot help the needy is evident, he has nothing to spare. But, perhaps, his advice or admonition may be useful. His poverty will destroy his influence: many more can find that he is poor, than that he is wise; and few will reverence the understanding that is of so little advantage to its owner.

I say nothing of the personal wretchedness of a debtor, which, however, has passed into a proverb. Of riches it is not necessary to write the praise. Let it, however, be remembered, that he who has money to spare, has it always in his power to benefit others; and of such power a good man must always be desirous.

I am pleased with your account of Easter. We shall meet, I hope, in autumn, both well and both cheerful; and part each the better for the other's company.

Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, and to the young charmers. I am, &c.



LETTER X.

DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

London, Sept. 7, 1782.

I HAVE struggled through this year with so much infirmity of body, and such strong impressions of fragility of life, that death, wherever it appears, fills me with melancholy: and I cannot hear without emotion, of the removal of any one, whom I have known, into another state.

Your father's death had every circumstance that could enable you to bear it; it was at a mature age, and it was expected; and as his general life had been pious, his thoughts had doubtless for many years past been turned upon eternity. That you did not find him sensible must doubtless grieve you; his disposition towards you was undoubtedly

that of a kind, though not of a fond father. Kindness, at least actual, is in our power, but fondness is not; and if by negligence or imprudence you had extinguished his fondness, he could not at will rekindle it. Nothing then remained between you but mutual forgiveness of each other's faults, and mutual desire of each other's happiness.

I shall long to know his final disposition of his fortune.

You, dear sir, have now a new station, and have therefore new cares, and new employments. Life, as Cowley seems to say, ought to resemble a well-ordered poem; of which one rule generally received is, that the exordium should be simple, and should promise little. Begin your new course of life with the least show, and the least expense possible; you may at pleasure increase both, but you cannot easily diminish them. Do not think your estate your own, while any man can call upon you for money which you cannot pay; therefore, begin with timorous parsimony. Let it be your first care not to be in any man's debt.

When the thoughts are extended to a future state, the present life seems hardly worthy of all those principles of conduct, and maxims of prudence, which one generation of men has transmitted to another; but upon a closer view, when it is perceived how much evil is produced, and how much good is impeded by embarrassment and distress, and how little room the expedients of poverty leave for the exercise of virtue; its sorrows manifest that the boundless importance of the next life enforces some attention to the interests of this.

Be kind to the old servants, and secure the kindness of the agents and factors : do not disgust them by asperity, or unwelcome gaiety, or apparent suspicion. From them you must learn the real state of your affairs, the characters of your tenants, and the value of your lands.

Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell; I think her expectations from air and exercise are the best that she can form. I hope she will live long and happily. I forgot whether I told you that Rasay has been here ; we dined cheerfully together. I entertained lately a young gentleman from Coriatachat.

I received your letters only this morning. I am, dear sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE.

DEAREST MADAM,

*Bolt-court, Fleet-street,
June 19, 1783.*

I AM sitting down in no cheerful solitude to write a narrative which would once have affected you with tenderness and sorrow, but which you will perhaps pass over now with the careless glance of frigid indifference. For this diminution of regard, however, I know not whether I ought to blame you, who may have reasons which I cannot know ; and I do not blame myself, who have for a great part of human life done you what good I could, and have never done you evil.

I had been disordered in the usual way, and had been relieved by the usual methods, by opium and cathartics, but had rather lessened my dose of opium.

On Monday the 16th I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has been long my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted I suppose about half a minute; I was alarmed, and prayed God, that however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good: I made them easily and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytick stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself when it should come would excite less horror than seems now to attend it.

In order to rouse the vocal organs I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it; but all was vain. I then went to bed, and strange as it may seem, I think, slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, he left me my hand; I enjoyed a

mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands.

I then wrote a card to Mr. Allen, that I might have a discreet friend at hand to act as occasion should require. In penning his note I had some difficulty; my hand, I knew not how nor why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr. Taylor to come to me, and bring Dr. Heberden, and I sent to Dr. Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly, and very disinterested, and give me great hopes, but you may imagine my situation. I have so far recovered my vocal powers, as to repeat the Lord's Prayer with no very imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was; but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty.

How this will be received by you I know not. I hope you will sympathise with me; but perhaps

My mistress, gracious, mild, and good,
Cries, Is he dumb? 'Tis time he shou'd.

But can this be possible? I hope it cannot. I hope that what, when I could speak, I spoke of you, and to you, will be in a sober and serious hour remembered by you; and surely it cannot be remembered but with some degree of kindness. I have loved you with virtuous affection; I have honoured you with sincere esteem. Let not all our endearments be forgotten, but let me have in

this great distress your pity and your prayers. You see I yet turn to you with my complaints as a settled and unalienable friend; do not, do not drive me from you, for I have not deserved either neglect or hatred.

To the girls, who do not write often, for Susy has written only once, and Miss Thrale owes me a letter, I earnestly recommend, as their guardian and friend, that they remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

I suppose you may wish to know how my disease is treated by the physicians. They put a blister upon my back, and two from my ear to my throat, one on a side. The blister on the back has done little, and those on the throat have not risen. I bullied and bounced (it sticks to our last sand), and compelled the apothecary to make his salve according to the Edinburgh Dispensatory, that it might adhere better. I have two on now of my own prescription. They likewise give me salt of hartshorn, which I take with no great confidence, but am satisfied that what can be done is done for me.

O God! give me comfort and confidence in Thee: forgive my sins: and if it be thy good pleasure, relieve my diseases for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

I am almost ashamed of this querulous letter; but now it is written, let it go. &c.

LETTER XII.

DR. JOHNSON TO MISS SUSANNAH THRALE.

DEAREST MISS SUSY,

WHEN you favoured me with your letter, you seemed to be in want of materials to fill it, having met with no great adventures either of peril or delight, nor done nor suffered any thing out of the common course of life.

When you have lived longer, and considered more, you will find the common course of life very fertile of observation and reflection. Upon the common course of life must our thoughts and our conversation be generally employed. Our general course of life must denominate us wise or foolish; happy or miserable: if it is well regulated, we pass on prosperously and smoothly; as it is neglected, we live in embarrassment, perplexity, and uneasiness.

Your time, my love, passes, I suppose in devotion, reading, work, and company. Of your devotions, in which I earnestly advise you to be very punctual, you may not perhaps think it proper to give me an account; and of work, unless I understood it better, it will be of no great use to say much; but books and company will always supply you with materials for your letters to me, as I shall always be pleased to know what you are reading, and with what you are pleased; and shall take great delight in knowing what impression new modes or new characters make upon you, and to observe with what attention you dis-

tinguish the tempers, dispositions, and abilities of your companions.

A letter may be always made out of the books of the morning or talk of the evening : and any letters from you, my dearest, will be welcome to your, &c.

LETTER XIII.

DR. JOHNSON TO MISS SOPHIA THRALE.

DEAREST MISS SOPHY, *London, July 24, 1783.*

BY an absence from home, and for one reason and another, I owe a great number of letters, and I assure you that I sit down to write yours first. Why you should think yourself not a favourite I cannot guess ; my favour will, I am afraid, never be worth much ; but be its value more or less, you are never likely to lose it, and less likely if you continue your studies with the same diligence as you have begun them.

Your proficiency in arithmetic is not only to be commended, but admired. Your master does not, I suppose, come very often, nor stay very long ; yet your advance in the science of numbers is greater than is commonly made by those who, for so many weeks as you have been learning, spend six hours a day in the writing-school.

Never think, my sweet, that you have arithmetic enough ; when you have exhausted your master, buy books. Nothing amuses more harmlessly than computation, and nothing is oftener applicable to real business or speculative inquiries. A

thousand stories which the ignorant tell, and believe, die away at once, when the computist takes them in his gripe. I hope you will cultivate in yourself a disposition to numerical inquiries ; they will give you entertainment in solitude by the practice, and reputation in public by the effect.

I you can borrow *Wilkin's Real Character*, a folio, which the bookseller can perhaps let you have, you will have a very curious calculation, which you are qualified to consider, to show that Noah's ark was capable of holding all the known animals of the world, with provision for all the time in which the earth was under water. Let me hear from you soon again. I am, madam, your, &c.

LETTER XIV.

DR. JOHNSON TO MISS SUSANNAH THRALE.

DEAR MISS SUSAN,

London, July 26, 1783.

I ANSWER your letter last, because it was received last ; and when I have answered it, I am out of debt to your house. A short negligence throws one behind hand. This maxim, if you consider and improve it, will be equivalent to your Parson and Bird, which is however a very good story, as it shows how far gluttony may proceed, which, where it prevails, is I think more violent, and certainly more despicable, than avarice itself.

Gluttony is, I think, less common among women, than among men. Women commonly eat more sparingly, and are less curious in the choice

of meat; but if once you find a woman gluttonous, expect from her very little virtue. Her mind is enslaved to the lowest and grossest temptation.

A friend of mine, who courted a lady, of whom he did not know much, was advised to see her eat, and if she was voluptuous at table, to forsake her. He married her, however, and in a few weeks came to his adviser with this exclamation, "It is the disturbance of my life to see this woman eat!" She was, as might be expected, selfish and brutal, and after some years of discord they parted, and I believe came together no more.

Of men, the examples are sufficiently common. I had a friend, of great eminence in the learned and the witty world, who had hung up some pots on his wall to furnish nests for sparrows. The poor sparrows, not knowing his character, were seduced by the convenience; and I never heard any man speak of any future enjoyment with such contortions of delight as he exhibited, when he talked of eating the young ones.

When you do me the favour to write again, tell me something of your studies, your work, or your amusements. I am, madam, your, &c.

LETTER XV.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE.

DEAR MADAM,

London, Nov. 13, 1783.

SINCE you have written to me with the attention and tenderness of ancient time, your letters give

me a great part of the pleasure which a life of solitude admits. You will never bestow any share of your good-will on one who deserves better. Those that have loved longest love best. A sudden blaze of kindness may by a single blast of coldness be extinguished; but that fondness which length of time has connected with many circumstances and occasions, though it may for a while be suppressed by disgust or resentment, with or without a cause, is hourly revived by accidental recollection. To those that have lived long together, every thing heard and every thing seen recalls some pleasure communicated, or some benefit conferred, some petty quarrel, or some slight endearment. Esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week, but a friendship of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of life. A friend may be often found and lost, but an *old friend* never can be found, and nature has provided that he cannot easily be lost.

I have not forgotten the Davenants, though they seem to have forgotten me. I began very early to tell them what they have commonly found to be true. I am sorry to hear of their building. I have always warned those whom I loved against that mode of ostentatious waste.

You seem to mention Lord Kilmurry as a stranger. We were at his house in Cheshire; and he one day dined with sir Lynch. What he tells of the epigram is not true, but perhaps he does not know it to be false. Do not you remember how he rejoiced in having *no park*? he could not disoblige his neighbours by sending them *no venison*.

The frequency of death, to those who look upon it in the leisure of Arcadia, is very dreadful. We all know what it should teach us; let us all be diligent to learn. Lucy Porter has lost her brother. But whom I have lost—let me not now remember. Let not your loss be added to the mournful catalogue. Write soon again to, madam, your, &c.

LETTER XVI.

MRS. THRALE TO MR. —, ON HIS MARRIAGE.

MY DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED the news of your marriage with infinite delight, and hope that the sincerity with which I wish your happiness may excuse the liberty I take in giving you a few rules whereby more certainly to obtain it. I see you smile at my wrong-headed kindness, and reflecting on the charms of your bride, cry out in a rapture, that you are happy enough without my rules. I know you are; but after one of the forty years, which I hope you will pass pleasingly together, are over, this letter may come in turn, and rules for felicity may not be found unnecessary, however some of them may appear impracticable.

Could that kind of love be kept alive through the married state, which makes the charm of a single one, the sovereign good would no longer be sought for; in the union of two faithful lovers it would be found: but reason shows us that this is impossible, and experience informs us that it never was

so ; we must preserve it as long, and supply it as happily, as we can.

When your present violence of passion subsides, however, and a more cool and tranquil affection takes its place, be not hasty to censure yourself as indifferent, or to lament yourself as unhappy ; you have lost that only which it was impossible to retain, and it were graceless amid the pleasures of a prosperous summer to regret the blossoms of a transient spring. Neither unwarily condemn your bride's insipidity till you have recollected that no object however sublime, no sounds however charming, can continue to transport us with delight when they no longer strike us with novelty. The skill to renovate the powers of pleasing is said indeed to be possessed by some women in an eminent degree, but the artifices of maturity are seldom seen to adorn the innocence of youth ; you have made your choice, and ought to approve it.

Satiety follows quick upon the heels of possession ; and to be happy, we must always have something in view. The person of your lady is already all your own, and will not grow more pleasing in your eyes I doubt, though the rest of your sex will think her handsomer for these dozen years. Turn, therefore, all your attention to her mind, which will daily grow brighter by polishing. Study some easy science together, and acquire a similarity of tastes while you enjoy a community of pleasures. You will, by this means, have many images in common, and be freed from the necessity of separating to find amusement ; nothing is so dangerous to wedded love as the possibility of either being happy out of the company of the

other ; endeavour therefore to cement the present intimacy on every side ; let your wife never be kept ignorant of your income, your expences, your friendships, or aversions ; let her know your very faults, but make them amiable by your virtues ; consider all concealment as a breach of fidelity ; let her never have any thing to find out in your character, and remember, that from the moment one of the partners turn spy upon the other, they have commenced a state of hostility.

Seek not for happiness in singularity ; and dread a refinement of wisdom as a deviation into folly. Listen not to those sages who advise you always to scorn the counsel of a woman, and if you comply with her requests pronounce you to be wife ridden. Think not any privation, except of positive evil, an excellence, and do not congratulate yourself that your wife is not a learned lady, that she never touches a card, or is wholly ignorant how to make a pudding. Cards, cookery, and learning, are all good in their places, and may all be used with advantage.

With regard to expence, I can only observe, that the money laid out in the purchase of distinction is seldom or ever profitably employed. We live in an age when splendid furniture and glittering equipage are grown too common to catch the notice of the meanest spectator, and for the greater ones they only regard our wasteful folly with silent contempt, or open indignation.—This may perhaps be a displeasing reflection, but the following consideration ought to make amends. The age we live in pays, I think, peculiar attention to the higher distinctions of wit, knowledge,

and virtue, to which we may more safely, more cheaply, and more honourably, aspire. The giddy flirt of quality frets at the respect she sees paid to lady Edgumbe, and the gay duncie sits pining for a partner, while Jones the orientalist leads up the ball.

I said that the person of your lady would not grow more pleasing to you, but pray let her never suspect that it grows less so: that a woman will pardon an affront to her understanding much sooner than one to her person, is well known: nor will any of us contradict the assertion. All our attainments, all our arts, are employed to gain and keep the heart of man; and what mortification can exceed the disappointment, if the end be not obtained! There is no reproof however pointed, no punishment however severe, that a woman of spirit will not prefer to neglect; and if she can endure it without complaint, it only proves that she means to make herself amends by the attention of others for the slights of her husband. For this, and for every reason, it behoves a married man not to let his politeness fail, though his ardour may abate, but to retain, at least, that general civility towards his own lady which he is so willing to pay to every other, and not show a wife of eighteen or twenty years old, that every man in company can treat her with more complaisance than he who so often vowed to her eternal fondness.

It is not my opinion that a young woman should be indulged in every wild wish of her gay heart or giddy head, but contradiction may be softened by domestic kindness, and quiet pleasures substituted

in the place of noisy ones. Public amusements are not indeed so expensive as is sometimes imagined, but they tend to alienate the minds of married people from each other. A well-chosen society of friends and acquaintance, more eminent for virtue and good sense than for gaiety and splendour, where the conversation of the day may afford comment for the evening, seems the most rational pleasure this great town can afford; and to this a game at cards now and then gives an additional relish.

That your own superiority should always be seen, but never felt, seems an excellent general rule. A wife should outshine her husband in nothing, not even in her dress. If she happens to have a taste for the trifling distinctions that finery can confer, suffer her not for a moment to fancy, when she appears in public, that sir Edward or the Colonel are finer gentlemen than her husband. The bane of married happiness among the city men in general has been, that finding themselves unfit for polite life they transferred their vanity to their ladies, dressed them up gaily, and sent them out a gallanting, while the good man was to regale with port wine or rum-punch, perhaps among mean companions, after the counting-house was shut; this practice produced the ridicule thrown on them in all our comedies and novels since commerce began to prosper. But now that I am so near the subject, a word or two on jealousy may not be amiss; for though not a failing of the present age's growth, yet the seeds of it are too certainly sown in every warm bosom for us to neglect it as a fault of no consequence. If you are ever

tempted to be jealous, watch your wife narrowly, but never tease her : tell her your jealousy, but conceal your suspicion ; let her, in short, be satisfied that it is only your odd temper, and even troublesome attachment, that makes you follow her ; but let her not dream that you ever doubted seriously of her virtue, even for a moment. If she is disposed towards jealousy of you, let me beseech you to be always explicit with her, and never mysterious : be above delighting in her pain of all things,—nor do your business, nor pay your visits, with an air of concealment, when all you are doing might as well be proclaimed perhaps in the parish vestry. But I will hope better than this of your tenderness and of your virtue, and will release you from a lecture you have so very little need of, unless your extreme youth and my uncommon regard will excuse it. And now farewell ; make my kindest compliments to your wife, and be happy in proportion as happiness is wished you by, dear sir, &c.

LETTER XVII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Huntingdon, June 21, 1765.

THE only recompense I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs, during my illness, is to tell you, that by the mercy of God I am restored to perfect health, both of mind and body. This, I believe, will give you pleasure, and I would

gladly do any thing from which you could receive it.

I left St. Alban's on the seventeenth, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the twenty-second. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions; we have had many worse, and except the size of it (which however is sufficient for a single man) but few better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St. Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says, he kept no servant because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them; but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow.

The river Ouse (I forget how they spell it) is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world; at this town it is I believe as wide as the Thames at Windsor: nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks, these being attributes which, in strict truth, belong to neither. Fluellen would say, they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task will cost you no great pains to

execute—particularly remember me to those of your own house, and believe me your very affectionate.

LETTER XVIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

October 25, 1765.

I AM afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavourable to the *belle assemblée* at Southampton, high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge which you and I are equally fond of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my books and my fire-side ; and seldom leave them unless for exercise. I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with, when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable : quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks, as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much, to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son, who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man ; and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They see but little company, which suits

me exactly : go when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and am sure to hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it, as we are all better for. You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning ; such are the mornings I spend with these good people ; and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug and quieter. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them ; and am apt to think I should find every place disagreeable, that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been always apt to do), we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr. Gray's stanza :

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The deep unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a rose is born to blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance in the desert air.”

Yours, dear Joe.

LETTER XIX.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

July, 16, 1767.

YOUR wishes, that the newspaper may have misinformed you, are vain. Mr. Unwin is dead, and died in the manner there mentioned. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us, and before ten, was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed, in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening. I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony; for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense that were indulged him he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour. To that strong hold we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death; when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter, to which we can repair to any purpose; and happy is it for us, when the false ground we have chosen for ourselves being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the rock which can never be shaken—when this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy.

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place, where, is at present uncertain. Yours.

LETTER XX.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

Sept. 21, 1779.

Amico mio, be pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond pencil. I have glazed the two frames designed to receive my pine-plants. But I cannot mend the kitchen windows, till by the help of that implement I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber, I should be a complete glazier; and possibly the happy time may come, when I shall be seen trudging away to the neighbouring towns with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I hardly know a business in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself. A Chinese, of ten times my fortune, would avail himself of such an opportunity without scruple; and why should not I, who want money as much as any mandarin in China? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed, with rapture, "that he had found the Emilius, who (he supposed) had subsisted only in his own idea." I would recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task; and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church windows; which, as it would save money to the parish, would conduce, together with your other ministerial accomplish-

ments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in the morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast, for I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good, if that should be the case, to announce yourself by some means or other. For I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your mother and I, last week, made a trip in a post-chaise to Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, about four miles off. He understood that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me that he was going into Leicestershire, and that, if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself, without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hot-house in the most flourishing state, and the orange-trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice. Our love attends you all. Yours.

LETTER XXI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 31, 1779.

I WROTE my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say, in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct, though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biography, for which I thank you: with one exception, and that a swinging one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. He has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of every thing royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvass. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him; and it is well for Milton, that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough, that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of

condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity, that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped, by prejudice, against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever any thing so delightful as the music of the *Paradise Lost*? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end, and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little, or nothing, to say upon this copious theme; but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room; our love attends you. Yours affectionately.

LETTER XXII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

Dec. 2, 1779.

MY dear friend, how quick is the succession of human events! The cares of to-day are seldom the cares of to-morrow; and when we lie down at

night, we may safely say, to most of our troubles —“Ye have done your worst, and we shall meet no more.”

This observation was suggested to me by reading your last letter; which, though I have written since I received it, I have never answered. When that epistle passed under your pen, you were miserable about your tithes, and your imagination was hung round with pictures, that terrified you to such a degree, as made even the receipt of money burthensome. But it is all over now. You sent away your farmers in good-humour (for you can make people merry whenever you please); and now you have nothing to do, but to chink your purse, and laugh at what is past. Your delicacy makes you groan under that which other men never feel, or feel but lightly. A fly, that settles upon the tip of the nose, is troublesome; and this is a comparison adequate to the most that mankind in general are sensible of, upon such tiny occasions. But the flies that pester you, always get between your eye-lids, where the annoyance is almost insupportable.

I would follow your advice, and endeavour to furnish lord North with a scheme of supplies for the ensuing year, if the difficulty I find in answering the call of my own emergencies did not make me despair of satisfying those of the nation. I can say but this: if I had ten acres of land in the world, whereas I have not one, and in those ten acres should discover a gold mine, richer than all Mexico and Peru, when I had reserved a few ounces for my own annual supply, I would willingly give the rest to government. My ambition would be more

gratified by annihilating the national incumbrances, than by going daily down to the bottom of a mine, to wallow in my own emolument. This is patriotism—you will allow; but, alas, this virtue is for the most part in the hands of those who can do no good with it! He that has but a single handful of it, catches so greedily at the first opportunity of growing rich, that his patriotism drops to the ground, and he grasps the gold instead of it. He that never meets with such an opportunity, holds it fast in his clenched fists, and says—"Oh, how much good I would do if I could!"

Your mother says—"Pray send my dear love." There is hardly room to add mine, but you will suppose it. Yours.

LETTER XXIII.

WM. COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

DEAR SIR,

May 3, 1780.

YOU indulge in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion in this scribbling employment, that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you for swallowing such boluses as I send you, for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe, I am the only man alive from whom they would be welcome to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid than they are, more alluring to the eye, at least, if not more pleasing to the taste; but my leaf-gold is tarnished, and has received such a tinge from the vapours

that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me, that you will read my letters. I am not fond of long-winded metaphors; I have always observed, that they halt at the latter end of their progress, and so does mine. I deal much in ink indeed, but not such ink as is employed by poets, and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid, and guilty of no deceptions, but such as may prevail, without the least injury, to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks, and dab-chicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin admires them; and her praise, and my praise put together, are fame enough for me. Oh! I could spend whole days, and moon-light nights, in feeding upon a lovely prospect: my eyes drink the rivers as they flow. If every human being upon earth could think for one quarter of an hour, as I have done for many years, there might, perhaps, be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one would be found, from the Arctic to the Antarctic circle. At present, the difference between them and me is greatly to their advantage. I delight in baubles, and know them to be so; for rested in, and viewed without a reference to their author, what is the earth, what are the planets, what is the sun itself, but a bauble? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, "The maker of all these wonders is my friend!" Their eyes have never been opened, to see that they are trifles; mine have been, and will be till they are closed for ever. They think a fine

estate, a large conservatory, a hot-house, rich as a West-Indian garden, things of consequence ; visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more. I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains will ever be worth a farthing ; amuse myself with a green-house which lord Bute's gardener could take upon his back, and walk away with ; and when I have paid it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself—"This is not mine, 'tis a plaything lent me for the present, I must leave it soon."

LETTER XXIV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 8, 1780.

MY scribbling humour has of late been entirely absorbed in the passion for landscape drawing. It is a most amusing art, and, like every other art, requires much practice and attention.

Ni^l sine magno
Vita labore dedit mortalibus.

Excellence is providentially placed beyond the reach of indolence, that success may be the reward of industry, and that idleness may be punished with obscurity and disgrace. So long as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind : I never received a *little* pleasure from any thing in my life ;

if I am delighted, it is in the extreme. The unhappy consequences of this temperature is, that my attachment to any occupation seldom outlives the novelty of it. That nerve of my imagination, that feels the touch of any particular amusement, twangs under the energy of the pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes sensible of weariness and fatigue. Hence I draw an unfavourable prognostic, and expect that I shall shortly be constrained to look out for something else. Then perhaps I may string the harp again, and be able to comply with your demand.

Now for the visit you propose to pay us, and propose *not* to pay us: the hope of which plays upon your paper, like a jack-o-lantern upon the ceiling. This is no mean simile, for Virgil (you remember) uses it. 'Tis here, 'tis there, it vanishes, it returns, it dazzles you, a cloud interposes, and it is gone. However just the comparison, I hope you will contrive to spoil it, and that your final determination will be to come. As to the masons you expect, bring them with you—bring brick, bring mortar, bring every thing, that would oppose itself to your journey—all shall be welcome. I have a green-house that is too small, come and enlarge it; build me a pinery; repair the garden wall, that has great need of your assistance; do any thing, you cannot do too much. So far from thinking you and your train troublesome, we shall rejoice to see you, upon these, or upon any other terms you can propose. But, to be serious—you will do well to consider, that a long summer is before you—that the party will not have such another opportunity to meet, this great

while—that you may finish your masonry long enough before winter, though you should not begin this month ; but that you cannot always find your brother and sister Powley, at Olney. These, and some other considerations, such as the desire we have to see you, and the pleasure we expect from seeing you all together, may, and, I think, ought to overcome your scruples.

From a general recollection of lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, I thought (and I remember I told you so) that there was a striking resemblance between that period and the present. But I am now reading, and have read, three volumes of Hume's History, one of which is engrossed entirely by that subject. There, I see reason to alter my opinion, and the seeming resemblance has disappeared, upon a more particular information. Charles succeeded to a long train of arbitrary princes, whose subjects had tamely acquiesced in the despotism of their masters, till their privileges were all forgot. He did but tread in their steps, and exemplify the principles in which he had been brought up, when he oppressed his people. But just at that time, unhappily for the monarch, the subject began to see, and to see that he had a right to property and freedom. This marks a sufficient difference between the disputes of that day and the present. But there was another main cause of that rebellion, which, at this time, does not operate at all. The king was devoted to the hierarchy ; his subjects were puritans, and would not bear it. Every circumstance of ecclesiastical order and discipline was an abomination to them, and in his esteem, an indispen-

sible duty ; and, though at last he was obliged to give up many things, he would not abolish episcopacy, and till that were done, his concessions would have no conciliating effect. These two concurring causes were indeed sufficient to set three kingdoms in a flame. But they subsist not now, nor any other, I hope, notwithstanding the bustle made by the patriots, equal to the production of such terrible events. Yours, my dear friend.

LETTER XXV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug. 6, 1780.

YOU like to hear from me—This is a very good reason why I should write—but I have nothing to say—This seems equally a good reason why I should not—Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me——“ Mr. Cowper, you have not spoke since I came in, have you resolved never to speak again?” It would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons, I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand ; that a letter may be written upon any thing or nothing, just as that any thing or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey be-

fore him twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate, and doubt, whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it; for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed, not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard before; but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving, as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop, till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—"My good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped, that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so good sir Launcelot, or St. Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the mean time, to think when we can and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch, smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens, and high

walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people, who resembled us so little in their taste, should resemble us in any thing else. But in every thing else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly; and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of the man at least, has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were. They wear perhaps a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior; but in every other respect, a modern is only an ancient in a different dress. Yours.

LETTER XXVI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 7, 1780.

As many gentlemen as there are in the world, who have children, and heads capable of reflecting upon the important subject of their education, so many opinions there are about it; and many of them just and sensible, though almost all differing from each other. With respect to the education of boys, I think they are generally made to draw in Latin and Greek trammels too soon. It is pleasing no doubt to a parent, to see his child already in some

sort a proficient in those languages, at an age when most others are entirely ignorant of them; but hence it often happens, that a boy who could construe a fable of *Æsop*, at six or seven years of age, having exhausted his little stock of attention and diligence, in making that notable acquisition, grows weary of his task, conceives a dislike for study, and perhaps makes but a very indifferent progress afterwards. The mind and body have, in this respect, a striking resemblance of each other. In childhood they are both nimble, but not strong; they can skip and frisk about with wonderful agility, but hard labour spoils them both. In maturer years they become less active, but more vigorous, more capable of a fixed application, and can make themselves sport with that, which a little earlier would have affected them with intolerable fatigue. I should recommend it to you, therefore, but (after all you must judge for yourself) to allot the two next years of little *John's* scholarship to writing and arithmetic, together with which, for variety's sake, and because it is capable of being formed into an amusement, I would mingle geography (a science which if not attended to betimes, is seldom made an object of much consideration), essentially necessary to the accomplishment of a gentleman; yet, as I know (by sad experience) imperfectly, if at all, inculcated in the schools. Lord *Spencer's* son when he was four years of age, knew the situation of every kingdom, country, city, river, and remarkable mountain in the world. For this attainment, which I suppose his father had never made, he was indebted to a plaything; having

been accustomed to amuse himself with those maps, which are cut into several compartments, so as to be thrown into a heap of confusion, that they may be put together again with an exact coincidence of all their angles and bearings, so as to form a perfect whole.

If he begins Latin and Greek at eight, or even at nine years of age, it is surely soon enough. Seven years, the usual allowance for these acquisitions, are more than sufficient for the purpose, especially with his readiness in learning ; for you would hardly wish to have him qualified for the university before fifteen, a period, in my mind, much too early for it, and when he could hardly be trusted there without the utmost danger to his morals. Upon the whole, you will perceive that, in my judgment, the difficulty, as well as the wisdom, consists more in bridling in and keeping back a boy of his parts, than pushing him forward. If, therefore, at the end of the two next years, instead of putting a grammar into his hand, you should allow him to amuse himself with some agreeable writers upon the subject of natural philosophy for another year, I think it would answer well. There is a book called *Cosmotheoria Puerilis*, there are *Durham's Physico and Astrotheology*, together with several others in the same manner very intelligible even to a child, and full of useful instruction.

LETTER XXVII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 6, 1781.

WHAT a world are you daily conversant with, which I have not seen these twenty years, and shall never see again! The arts of dissipation (I suppose) are no where practised with more refinement or success, than at the place of your present residence. By your account of it, it seems to be just what it was when I visited it,—a scene of idleness and luxury, music, dancing, cards, walking, riding, bathing, eating, drinking, coffee, tea, scandal, dressing, yawning, sleeping; the rooms perhaps more magnificent because the proprietors are grown richer, but the manners and occupations of the company just the same. Though my life has long been like that of a recluse, I have not the temper of one, nor am I in the least an enemy to cheerfulness and good-humour; but I cannot envy you your situation: I even feel myself constrained to prefer the silence of this nook, and the snug fire-side in our own diminutive parlour, to all the splendour and gaiety of Brighton.

You ask me how I feel on the occasion of my approaching publication?—Perfectly at my ease. If I had not been pretty well assured before-hand, that my tranquillity would be but little endangered by such a measure, I would never have engaged in it? for I cannot bear disturbance. I have had in view two principal objects; first, to amuse myself—and secondly, to compass that point in such

a manner, that others might possibly be the better for my amusement. If I have succeeded, it will give me pleasure, but if I have failed, I shall not be mortified to the degree that might perhaps be expected. I remember an old adage (though not where it is to be found), "*bene vixit, qui bene latuit*;" and if I had recollected it at the right time, it should have been the motto to my book. By the way, it will make an excellent one for retirement, if you can but tell me whom to quote for it. The critics cannot deprive me of the pleasure I have in reflecting, that so far as my leisure has been employed in writing for the public, it has been conscientiously employed, and with a view to their advantage. There is nothing agreeable, to be sure, in being chronicled for a dunce; but I believe, there lives not a man upon earth who would be less affected by it than myself. With all this indifference to fame, which you know me too well to suppose me capable of affecting, I have taken the utmost pains to deserve it. This may appear a mystery, or a paradox in practice; but it is true. I considered that the taste of the day is refined, and delicate to excess; and that to disgust that delicacy of taste, by a slovenly inattention to it, would be to forfeit, at once, all hope of being useful; and for this reason, though I have written more verse this last year than perhaps any man in England, I have finished, and polished, and touched and retouched, with the utmost care. If after all, I should be converted into waste paper, it may be my misfortune, but it shall not be my fault. I shall bear it with the most perfect serenity.

I do not mean to give —— a copy: he is a good-natured little man, and crows exactly like a cock; but knows no more of verse, than the cock he imitates.

Whoever supposes that lady Austen's fortune is precarious, is mistaken. I can assure you, upon the ground of the most circumstantial and authentic information, that it is both genteel and perfectly safe. Yours.

LETTER XXVIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov. 26, 1781.

I WROTE to you by the last post, supposing you at Stock; but lest that letter should not follow you to Laytonstone, and you should suspect me of unreasonable delay; and lest the frank you have sent me should degenerate into waste paper and perish upon my hands, I write again. The former letter, however, containing all my present stock of intelligence, it is more than possible that this may prove a blank, or but little worthy your acceptance. You will do me the justice to suppose, that if I could be very entertaining, I would be so; because, by giving me credit for such a willingness to please, you only allow me a share of that universal vanity which inclines every man, upon all occasions, to exhibit himself to the best advantage. To say the truth, however, when I write, as I do to you, not about business, nor on any subject that

approaches to that description, I mean much less my correspondent's amusement, which my modesty will not always permit me to hope for, than my own. There is a pleasure annexed to the communication of one's ideas, whether by word of mouth, or by letter, which nothing earthly can supply the place of; and it is the delight we find in this mutual intercourse, that not only proves us to be creatures intended for social life, but more than any thing else, perhaps, fits us for it.—I have no patience with philosophers—they, one and all, suppose (at least I understand it to be a prevailing opinion among them) that man's weakness, his necessities, his inability to stand alone, have furnished the prevailing motive, under the influence of which he renounced at first a life of solitude, and became a gregarious creature. It seems to me more reasonable as well as more honourable to my species, to suppose, that generosity of soul, and a brotherly attachment to our own kind, drew us, as it were, to one common centre; taught us to build cities, and inhabit them, and welcome every stranger that would cast in his lot amongst us, that we might enjoy fellowship with each other, and the luxury of reciprocal endearments, without which a paradise could afford no comfort. There are, indeed, all sorts of characters in the world; there are some whose understandings are so sluggish, and whose hearts are such mere clods, that they live in society without either contributing to the sweets of it, or having any relish for them.—A man of this stamp passes by our window continually—I never saw him conversing with a neighbour but once in my life, though I have known him by sight these

twelve years—he is of a very sturdy make, and has a round belly, extremely protuberant; which he evidently considers as his best friend, because it is his only companion, and it is the labour of his life to fill it. I can easily conceive, that it is merely the love of good eating and drinking, and now and then the want of a new pair of shoes, that attaches this man so much to the neighbourhood of his fellow-mortals; for suppose these exigencies, and others of a like kind, to subsist no longer, and what is there that could give society the preference in his esteem? He might strut about with his two thumbs upon his hips in the wilderness, he could hardly be more silent than he is at Olney; and for any advantage or comfort of friendship, or brotherly affection, he could not be more destitute of such blessings there than in his present situation. But other men have something more than guts to satisfy; there are the yearnings of the heart, which, let philosophers say what they will, are more importunate than all the necessities of the body, that will not suffer a creature, worthy to be called human, to be content with an insulated life, or to look for his friends among the beasts of the forest. Yourself for instance! It is not because there are no tailors, or pastry-cooks, to be found upon Salisbury plain, that you do not choose it for your abode, but because you are a philanthropist—because you are susceptible of social impressions, and have a pleasure in doing a kindness when you can. Now, upon the word of a poor creature, I have said all that I have said without the least intention to say one word of it when I began. But thus it is with my thoughts—when

you shake a crab-tree, the fruit falls; good for nothing indeed when you have got it, but still the best that is to be expected from a crab-tree. You are welcome to them, such as they are; and if you approve my sentiments, tell the philosophers of the day, that I have out-shot them all, and have discovered the true origin of society, when I least looked for it.

LETTER XXIX.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 12, 1782.

EVERY extraordinary occurrence in our lives, affords us an opportunity to learn, if we will, something more of our own hearts and tempers than we were before aware of. It is easy to promise ourselves before-hand, that our conduct shall be wise, or moderate, or resolute, on any given occasion. But when that occasion occurs, we do not always find it easy to make good the promise: such a difference there is between theory and practice. Perhaps this is no new remark; but it is not a whit the worse for being old, if it be true.

Before I had published, I said to myself—You and I, Mr. Cowper, will not concern ourselves much about what the critics may say of our book. But having once sent my wits for a venture, I soon became anxious about the issue, and found that I could not be satisfied with a warm place in my own good graces, unless my friends were pleased with me as much as I pleased myself. Meeting with

their approbation, I began to feel the workings of ambition. It is well, said I, that my friends are pleased, but friends are sometimes partial; and mine, I have reason to think, are not altogether free from bias. Methinks I should like to hear a stranger or two speak well of me. I was presently gratified by the approbation of the London Magazine, and the Gentleman's, particularly by that of the former, and by the plaudit of Dr. Franklin. By the way, magazines are publications we have but little respect for, till we ourselves are chronicled in them; and then they assume an importance in our esteem, which before we could not allow them. But the Monthly Review, the most formidable of all my judges, is still behind. What will that critical Rhadamanthus say, when my shivering genius shall appear before him? Still he keeps me in hot water, and I must wait another month for his award. Alas! when I wish for a favourable sentence from that quarter (to confess a weakness, that I should not confess to all), I feel myself not a little influenced by a tender regard to my reputation here, even among my neighbours at Olney. Here are watch-makers, who themselves are wits, and who, at present perhaps, think me one. Here is a carpenter, and a baker; and not to mention others, here is your idol Mr. —, whose smile is fame. All these read the Monthly Review, and all these will set me down for a dunce, if those terrible critics should show them the example. But oh! wherever else I am accounted dull, dear Mr. Griffith, let me pass for a genius at Olney.

We are sorry for little William's illness. It is however the privilege of infancy to recover almost

immediately, what it has lost by sickness. We are sorry too for Mr. ———'s dangerous condition. But he that is well prepared for the great journey, cannot enter on it too soon for himself, though his friends will weep at his departure. Yours.

LETTER XXX.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Nov. 18, 1782.

ON the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficial friend Mr. ———. I call him ours, because having experienced his kindness to myself in a former instance, and in the present his disinterested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy; no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character. I wish, and your mother wishes it too, that he could sometimes take us in his way to ———; he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honour to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money; but in this town, where the Gospel has been preached so many years, where the people had been favoured so

long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity. The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty, would be to abuse it.—We promise, however, that none shall touch it but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and honest, two characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread. We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing. Thanks are due to yourself likewise, and are hereby accordingly rendered, for waving your claim in behalf of your own parishioners. You are always with them, and they are always, at least some of them, the better for your residence among them. Olney is a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and ragged of the earth; and it is not possible for our small party, and small ability, to extend their operations so far as to be much felt among such numbers. Accept therefore your share of their gratitude, and be convinced, that when they pray for a blessing upon those who relieved their wants, He that answers that prayer, and when he answers it, will remember his servant at Stock.

I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print—I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laugh, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as

we have.—Well—they do not always laugh so innocently, and at so small an expense—for in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody, has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was *Vive la bagatelle*—a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle*—has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity—a melancholy that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote, have been written in the saddest mood, and, but for that saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all.

I hear from Mrs. Newton, that some great persons have spoken with great approbation of a certain book—Who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a future letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the mean time have satisfied me well enough. Yours, my dear William.

LETTER XXXI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

May 31, 1783.

WE rather rejoice than mourn with you on the occasion of Mrs. C——'s death. In the case of be-

lievers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature, indeed, will always suggest some causes of sorrow, when an amiable and Christian friend departs, but the Scripture, so many more, and so much more important reasons to rejoice, that on such occasions, perhaps more remarkably than on any other, sorrow is turned into joy. The law of our land is affronted if we say the king diés, and insists on it that he only demises. This, which is a fiction, where a monarch only is in question, in the case of a Christian, is reality and truth. He only lays aside a body, which it is his privilege to be encumbered with no longer; and instead of dying, in that moment he begins to live. But this the world does not understand, therefore the kings of it must go on demising to the end of the chapter.

LETTER XXXII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

June 8, 1783.

OUR severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite recess, the green-house. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the

spot are themselves an interruption, my attention being called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the rev. Mr. Bull of Newport; perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do, that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it; an imagination, which when he finds himself in the company he loves and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party; at other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one; and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity, is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either. He can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco --nothing is perfect.—

Nihil est ab omni

Parte beatum.

On the other side I send you a something, a song, if you please, composed last Thursday—the incident happened the day before*. Yours.

LETTER XXXIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 27, 1783.

YOU cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me, than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon which many grave and perhaps some profitable observations might be made: but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative, and the reflection it might suggest, are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, What did it produce? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both—Nothing!—A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted. My passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased; a circumstance, I should esteem wonderful to a de-

* Here followed his song of the Rose.

gree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind; did I not know that we think as we are made to think, and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chooses for us. Thus I am both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me; I am not shut up in the Bastile; there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key—but an invisible, uncontrollable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness of those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss always the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal; and am persuaded that, were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelvemonth, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects which, to all the world beside, would be at least indifferent; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch, and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. But so it is; and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of Him that placed me in it.

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

It is the place of all the world I love the most ; not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always, Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manners. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety : but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say ; which, as history is a thing to be said, and not sung, is, in my judgment, very much to your advantage. A writer that despises their tricks, and is yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves himself, by that single circumstance, a man of superior judgment and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense, and a desire of doing good, are the predominant features—but affectation is an emetic.

LETTER XXXIV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

Aug. 4, 1783.

MY dear William, I feel myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the inquiry you propose. But I am pretty well prepared for the worst; and so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favour, and am thereby convinced that I have neither disgraced myself nor my subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim, with success, at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing on scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a poet to entertain in days like these. Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly, and be not mortified, even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin; for it is no more than we have reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times, and we will acquit the poet.

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge, as much as I was myself. The tune laid me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines; which, I suppose, would suit no ear but a French one,

neither did I intend any thing more than that the subject, and the words, should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry, I believe, peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it; but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of; and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the *What do you call it?*—" 'Twas when the seas were roaring." I have been well informed, that they all contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows this country ever saw, did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success however answered their wishes. The ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing, in my judgment, all that Ovid or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more touching and pathetic, than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads, and ballad-writers.—“A worthy subject,” you will say, “for a man, whose head might be filled with better things:”—and it is filled with better things;—but to so ill a purpose, that I thrust into it all manner of topics, that may prove more amusing; as for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the green-house. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall: the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and on my return, was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him; and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird; but casting my eye upon the other cage, perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape it had afforded him, than to salute his friend, and to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than one minute, he thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour’s cage, kissing as at the first, and singing as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship, as, for the sake of its gratification, had twice declined an opportunity to be free; and

consenting to their union, resolved, that for the future one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents. For at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.

I transcribe for you a piece of madam Guion; not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them. Yours ever.

LETTER XXXV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Sept. 29, 1783.

WE are sorry that you and your household partake so largely of the ill effects of this unhealthy season. You are happy however in having hitherto escaped the epidemic fever, which has prevailed much in this part of the kingdom, and carried many off. Your mother and I are well. After more than a fortnight's indisposition, which slight appellation is quite adequate to the description of all I suffered, I am at length restored by a grain or two of emetic tartar. It is a tax I generally pay in autumn. By this time, I hope, a purer ether than we have seen for months, and these brighter suns than the summer had to boast, have cheered your spirits, and made your existence more comfortable. We are rational; but we are animal too, and therefore subject to the influences of the weather. The cattle in the fields show evident symptoms of lassitude and disgust in an

unpleasant season ; and we, their lords and masters, are constrained to sympathize with them : the only difference between us is, that they know not the cause of their dejection, and we do ; but for our humiliation, are equally at a lost to cure it. Upon this account I have sometimes wished myself a philosopher. How happy in comparison with myself, does the sagacious investigator of nature seem, whose fancy is ever employed in the invention of *hypotheses*, and his reason in the support of them ! While he is accounting for the origin of the winds, he has no leisure to attend to their influence upon himself—and, while he considers what the sun is made of, forgets that he has not shone for a month. One project indeed supplants another. The *vortices* of Descartes gave way to the gravitation of Newton, and this again is threatened by the electrical fluid of a modern. One generation blows bubbles, and the next breaks them. But in the mean time your philosopher is a happy man. He escapes a thousand inquietudes, to which the indolent are subject ; and finds his occupation, whether it be the pursuit of a butterfly or a demonstration, the wholesomest exercise in the world. As he proceeds, he applauds himself. His discoveries, though eventually perhaps they prove but dreams, are to him realities. The world gaze at him, as he does at new phenomena in the heavens, and perhaps understand him as little. But this does not prevent their praises, nor at all disturb him in the enjoyment of that self-complacence, to which his imaginary success entitles him. He wears his honours while he lives ; and if another strips them off when he has been

dead a century, it is no great matter; he can then make shift without them.

I have said a great deal upon this subject, and know not what it all amounts to. I did not intend a syllable of it when I began. But *currente calamo*, I stumbled upon it. My end is to amuse myself and you. The former of these two points is secured. I shall be happy if I do not miss the latter.

By the way, what is your opinion of these air-balloons? I am quite charmed with the discovery. Is it not possible (do you suppose) to convey such a quantity of inflammable air into the stomach and abdomen, that the philosopher, no longer gravitating to a centre, shall ascend by his own comparative levity, and never stop till he has reached the medium exactly *in equilibrio* with himself! May he not, by the help of a pasteboard-rudder, attached to his posteriors, steer himself in that purer element with ease, and again by a slow and gradual discharge of his aerial contents, recover his former tendency to the earth, and descend without the smallest danger or inconvenience? These things are worth inquiry, and (I dare say) they will be inquired after as they deserve. The *pennæ non homini datæ*, are likely to be less regretted than they were; and perhaps a flight of academicians, and a covey of fine ladies, may be no uncommon spectacle in the next generation. A letter which appeared in the public prints last week, convinces me that the learned are not without hopes of some such improvement upon this discovery. The author is a sensible and ingenious man; and, under a reasonable apprehension that

the ignorant may feel themselves inclined to laugh upon a subject that affects himself with the utmost seriousness, with much good manners, and management, bespeaks their patience, suggesting many good consequences, that may result from a course of experiments upon this machine; and amongst others, that it may be of use in ascertaining the shape of continents and islands, and the face of wide-extended and far distant countries; an end not to be hoped for, unless by these means of extraordinary elevation the human prospect may be immensely enlarged, and the philosopher, exalted to the skies, attain a view of the whole hemisphere at once. But whether he is to ascend by the mere inflation of his person, as hinted above, or whether in a sort of band-box, supported upon balloons, is not yet apparent, nor (I suppose) even in his own idea perfectly decided. Yours, my dear William.

LETTER XXXVI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 6, 1783.

IT is indeed a melancholy consideration, that the Gospel, whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind, in the present as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its Author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes,

the tools of popes, have produced incidentally so much mischief; only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from heaven to publish peace between man and his Maker—the Prince of Peace himself comes to confirm and establish it; and war, hatred, and desolation, are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book, which none of them understand. He that is slain, dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him; and he that slew him, is equally convinced that he has done God service. In reality, they are both mistaken, and equally unentitled to the honour they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should set out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road till a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be that none of them would ever reach it; and such a fray, preposterous and shocking in the extreme, would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world thus occupied at present even because they have exchanged a zeal that was no better than madness, for an indifference equally pitiable and absurd? The holy sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations called Christian, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because he that was buried in it is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy, has cured

them indeed of the misery of an abused understanding; but together with the delusion they have lost the substance, and for the sake of the lies that were grafted upon it, have quarrelled with the truth itself. Here then we see the *ne plus ultra* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to non-essentials, but with respect to that in which the essence of Christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that in different ages have disgraced the faith; but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted, shall be known hereafter. One thing in the mean time is certain; that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples of the Gospel, have been more dangerous to its interests, than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries; and perhaps for this cause these mischiefs might be suffered to prevail for a season, that its divine original and nature might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it was able to stand its ground for ages against that most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The outrages that have followed this perversion of the truth, have proved indeed a stumbling-block to individuals; the wise of this world, with all their wisdom, have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and abuse of it. Voltaire was offended, and Gibbon has turned his back; but the flock of Christ is still nourished, and still increases, notwithstanding the unbelief of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone, and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the voyages which I received, and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor : my main-sail is rent into shreds ; I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian : and all this without moving from the fire-side. The principal fruits of these circuits, that have been made around the globe, seem likely to be the amusement of those that staid at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly satisfy the expense of such undertakings. We brought away an Indian ; and having debauched him, we sent him home again to communicate the infection to his country—fine sport, to be sure, but such as will not defray the cost. Nations that live upon bread-fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our acquaintance will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them ; their poverty is indeed their mercy. Yours, my dear friend.

LETTER XXXVII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Jan. 3, 1784.

YOUR silence began to be distressing to both your mother and me ; and had I not received a letter from you last night, I should have written by this post to inquire after your health. How can it be, that you, who are not stationary like me, but often change your situation, and mix with a variety

of company, should suppose me furnished with such abundant materials, and yourself destitute. I assure you faithfully, that I do not find the soil of Olney prolific in the growth of such articles as make letter-writing a desirable employment. No place contributes less to the catalogue of incidents, or is more scantily supplied with anecdotes worth notice.

We have

One parson, one poet, one belman, one crier,
And the poor poet is our only 'squire.

Guess then if I have not more reason to expect two letters from you, than you one from me. The principal occurrence, and that which affects me most at present, came to pass this moment. The stair-foot door being swelled by the thaw, would do any thing better than it would open. An attempt to force it upon that office has been attended with such a horrible dissolution of its parts, that we were immediately obliged to introduce a churgeon, commonly called a carpenter, whose applications we have some hope will cure it of a lock'd jaw, and heal its numerous fractures. His medicines are powerful chalybeates, and a certain glutinous salve, which he tells me is made of the tails and ears of animals. The consequences, however, are rather unfavourable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption.

This being the case, I shall not, perhaps, be either so perspicuous or so diffuse on the subject of which you desire my sentiments, as I should be; but I will do my best. Know then, that I have

learnt long since of Abbé Raynal, to hate all monopolies, as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large; consequently the charter in question would not, at any rate, be a favourite of mine. This, however, is of itself, I confess, no sufficient reason to justify the resumption of it. But such reasons I think are not wanting. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the non-performance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited if those conditions are exceeded; if the design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were never in the contemplation of the donor? This appears to me to be no misrepresentation of their case, whose charter is supposed to be in danger. It constitutes them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East Indies. But it does no more. It invests them with no sovereignty; it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the king cannot alienate, if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised; and forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should even have a right, unless such a one as it is a disgrace to plead—the right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel, as often as they please, making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance, that I have ever heard, consulting

their interest or advantage. That government, therefore, is bound to interfere, and to un-king these tyrants, is to me self-evident. And if, having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding on the legislature to resume it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one, must follow the neglect of it. But suppose this were done, can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance; never was a charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such a measure should be drawn into a precedent; unless it could be alleged, as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the governors of the Bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the mean time I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such a disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours affectionately.

LETTER XXXVIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb. 10, 1784.

THE morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert; and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us, whom they call nervous. By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up; it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of punctuating ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed and fit to appear abroad. But on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery; but physicians, I presume, they had none,

having no need of any. Is it possible that a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without clothing, would defy the severest season; and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would perhaps have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference however, that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices and enfeebling self-indulgence of a long line of grandsires, who, from generation to generation, have been employed in deteriorating the breed; till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self: a man indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me: a man who sigh and groan, who wear out life in dejection and depression of spirits, and who never think of the aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating

sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him; a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly charactered, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward indeed in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes; to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution, and who being the first of his race did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis, therefore, there has been a gradual declension, in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me; at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case. Yours, my dear friend.

LETTER XXXIX.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 5, 1784.

A DEARTH of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are, for the most part, and must be uninteresting and unimportant; but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing such a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present; and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation: during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigours of winter. This fine day, however, affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities, that even a good under-

standing may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems, however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to our own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence, that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture, as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his satires with an observation, that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus and Styx and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader, at the same time, cause to suspect, that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness, that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Elusinian mysteries. Yet we know, that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine, as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information and their mental advantages were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense or nonsense, upon

the subject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum, if after advertising a month in the Gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him, or his measures, so little as I do. When I say, that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood, that I would forfeit such a sum if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But at the best, I fear that he will have to say at last with Hector,

Si Pergama dextrâ

Defendi possent, etiâ hâc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says, indeed, that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated, it seems to amount to this—“ Make the necessaries of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; and if they buy none, the tax as to them, will be annihilated.” True. But, in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but

little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors, to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrum.

Yours affectionately.

LETTER XL.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 18, 1781.

FOLLOWING your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that, in my judgment of it, has been very unworthy of your acceptance; but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter; and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser.

My green-house is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the

calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in the summer; when the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being, at the same time, incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower, in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees; but if I lived in a hive, I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that Nature utters are delightful, at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing; but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody; but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-yard, is no bad performer: and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble, to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however, it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such

an exact accord has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits.—And if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert; and the ear of man is for ever regaled, by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the gospel, are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space, a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy: and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found: tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even to despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours.

LETTER XLI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Oct. 12, 1785.

IT is no new thing with you to give pleasure. But I will venture to say, that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter franked by my uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself—"This is just as it should be. We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more, are actually returned." You perceive, therefore, that you judged well when you conjectured, that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise than, as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprise; for I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value; if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes, in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure; at times, too, when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights Entertainment, which afforded us, as

you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Netley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years. Should I say, within these twelvemonths, I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind, so deeply as to fear no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend, sir Thomas. I should remember him indeed, at any rate, on account of his personal kindness to myself; but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you, endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance), and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done. As it was the last, so it was the best proof, that he could give of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me:—that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter; but it is no matter. I must tell you, however, my cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation, is true; I live, and have lived these twenty years, with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me, during the far greater part of that time, it is (under Providence) owing, that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind, that has

made all that care and attention necessary ; an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject : it would be cruel to particularise only to give pain ; neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my uncle's good health. To enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day, is much. But to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and, in these postdiluvian times, a rarity indeed. Happy, for the most part, are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived, even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear cousin, dejection of spirits, which (I suppose) may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently ; as I know by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse absorbs it wholly. I write, therefore, generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write : for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer.

I answer, at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer, at Olney. Ay, and the winters also, I have seldom left it; and, except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never, I believe, a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved cousin, I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can. Yours, my dear friend and cousin.

LETTER XLII.

WM. COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

IT is very pleasant, my dearest cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous; but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself therefore driven by stress of necessity to the following resolutions, *viz.* that I will constitute you my thanks-receiver general, for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with crystal, having the figures of three hares in the fore-ground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Pea-*

stant's nest—and below with these—*Tiny Puss and Bess*. For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country fellows, to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart; and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback; and therefore it is, that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last, I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment: for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness; at which time whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once, however, I will venture—On Wednesday last, I received from

Johnson the MS. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and, inclosed in the same cover, notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such; and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson that I would gladly submit my MS. to his friend. He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who, I promise you, will not spare for severity of animadversion where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer; and for that reason, if Maty will see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay, that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad. It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five; for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing; and upon my own experience I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger, therefore, that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I

be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always! and without reference to her taste and judgment I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved cousin! Farewel.

LETTER XLIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, *Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.*

I HAVE been impatient to tell you, that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely oc-

cupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologised very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself, in future, to a comparison of me with the original, so that (I doubt not) we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall bear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks—every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June; because before that time my green-house will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honey-suckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention, the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as

soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made. But a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we shall be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest cousin.

LETTER XLIV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, *Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.*

IT must be (I suppose) a fortnight or thereabouts since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep—in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can; but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you, that by the diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest consin, read it yourself, let the General read it, do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work

have past under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt before-hand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another; and I firmly believe, that I might have gone the world through before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has no doubt forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e and her sister, in King-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said—"Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will." "These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled, and said—"Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose that he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely.

LETTER XLV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

SINCE so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never

sleep under the roof of an enemy ! An enemy however you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you, that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance: I feel my reluctance too. Our design was that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study ; and its having been occupied by you, would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you : and because we have nothing so much at heart, as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted ; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June ; and June my cousin, was never so wished for, since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say ; and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—sooner or later they will all come out ; and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof (a circumstance that, more than any thing, reconciles us to that measure), they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead ; and for

my own part, I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated, taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware, that in this respect I am under a disadvantage; and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect; on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original, will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever lived, for many reasons; but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well; and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me, otherwise to Johnson immediately; for he writes me word, he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together, for they have worried me with-

out remorse or conscience. At least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess, that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone; but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my cousin whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent* he keeps it for me. Adieu, dear cousin.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

LETTER XLVI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, *Olney, April 17, 1786.*

IF you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly—

“ Hope deferred maketh the heart sick ; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life ! ” I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight’s delay.

* * * * *

The vicarage was built by lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square and well walled, but has neither arbour, nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden, affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain ; for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard ; and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for

you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces ; but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in, even unto death. She loves you already ; and how much more will she love you, before this time twelvemonth ! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her ; but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney ; and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent dear relation ; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprising me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does ! But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown ; and his choice is, and ever shall be, so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be ; but I cannot remember the time when they en-

joyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose, that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject ; but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it ; and so content, that though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again ; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor ; that is to say, I slept three years in his house : but I lived ; that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton-row, as you very well remember. There was I. and the future lord chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. Oh fie, cousin ! how could you do so ? I am pleased with lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would deserve it at my hands : that I did so once is certain. The duchess of — , Who in the world set her a-going ? But if

all the duchesses in the world were spinning like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle, that puts the universe in motion. Yours, my dear friend and cousin.

LETTER XLVII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

YOUR letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble, lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing-day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin: Follow my laudable example, write when you can; take Time's forelock in one hand and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters, I hear you talk; and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off; and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way,

you must either send me or bring me some more paper ; for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions, I shall not have a scrap left ; and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance ; but when you say that you are a Cowper (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart), you must not forget, that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am an *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. —But these matters shall be settled, as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me ; for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any ; and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel above alluded to, came from—whom do you think ? From ——, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it, except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned ; and when you come, you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things

to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from —, I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come. Adieu!

You inquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as our rides. They are beautiful. You inquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! But a few more weeks, and then!

LETTER XLVIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, *Olney, May 15, 1786.*

FROM this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently and most comfortably hope, that before the 15th of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each

other. Is is not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary æras of my extraordinary life? A year ago we neither corresponded, nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and (blessed be God!) they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then, in the course of an existence whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it, (canst thou tell me?) that together with all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful, flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel, when I think of our meeting, and such, I suppose, feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know, beforehand, that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you; and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause; and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been fore-ordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is nothing such; no, not even in your menaces, un-

less when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none, if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with and to conquer them. They are dreams. They are illusions of the judgment. Some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us; and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are, is a proof of it. Nothing, that is such, can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus: you will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I. But we will both recollect, that there is no reason why we should: and this recollection will at least, have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long, I trust, as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his cen-

sures harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that (he supposed) I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible; and the sensibilities that I had by nature, have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme; am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last, would at any time restore my spirits; and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing, that, till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that, at so late a period, was yet open to me; and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing, therefore, that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same pre-

dicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me. But you will not; and they (I think) would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God, when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him, who *hath* (that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently and so as to increase it), more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymers, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise; and the consequence has been, that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is—"Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more."

LETTER XLIX.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

How apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question ! You say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine : a mistake to which you must attribute my arrears, if indeed I owe you any ; for I am not backward to write where the uppermost thought is welcome.

I am obliged to you for all the books you have occasionally furnished me with : I did not indeed read many of Johnson's Classics—those of established reputation are so fresh in my memory, though many years have intervened since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again ; and as to the minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at all—I tasted most of them, and did not like them—it is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet—I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over ; and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his life seems to have undertaken that task, for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story, with doubts about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could

forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and under the erroneous influence of that thought, informs his reader that "Gotham," "Independence," and "The Times," were catchpennies. Gotham, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance (and Dryden perhaps, in his "Absalom and Achitophel," stands in need of the same indulgence) for an unwarrantable use of scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. Independence is a most animated piece, full of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character which I think is the great peculiarity of this writer. And The Times (except that the subject is disgusting to the last degree) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part; but where shall we find in any of those authors, who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, whose numbers so hazardously ventured upon and so happily finished the matter so compressed and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise, that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer, which he lays to the charge of others: a proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that he was qualified to do it by his own native powers, and his great superiority of genius. For he that wrote so much, and so fast, would, through inadvertence

and hurry, unavoidably have departed from rules which he might have found in books; but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion, though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart-horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters; but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well-being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph:

“ Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
Esse sinent——”

Yours.

LETTER L.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.

I SENT you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected; but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me, that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the

more prudent, as well as the more Christian course, to possess the comforts that we find in it, as if we possessed them not; it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God who gave them, may, when he pleases, take them away; and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become more useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management; and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent; by his literary proficiency too clever for a school-boy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life, of such a character and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. It is well

for his mother that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence; else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death, of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more!

LETTER LI.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.

THE parliament, my dearest cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me; and none but the king and his ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope however that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant; and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a kitten, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be

described, and would be incredible if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age; but time, I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her, I hope, before that melancholy period shall arrive; for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event however must be supposed to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered, last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a leech in a bottle that foretels all these prodigies and convulsions of nature. No, not, as you will naturally conjecture, by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him; and that, in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the barometers in the world. None of them all indeed can make the least pretence to foretel thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him which is a groat more than the market price; though he is in fact, or rather would be, if leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition.

LETTER LII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity, because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us, or yourself, with a journey to Weston. Yourself, I say, both because I know it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi** once more, especially in the comfortable abode where you have placed him; and because, after so long an imprisonment in London, you, who love the country, and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new; and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelvemonth, and have during the half of that time been at liberty to expatiate and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you would never be satisfied with enjoying—some of them are unapproachable by you either on foot or in your carriage. Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach-wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it indeed (as Burnet says that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface), they might

* The appellation which sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest when he was of the Temple.

have been seen there every day. We have other walks both upon hill tops, and in valleys beneath, some of which by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-Saints in Northampton; brother of Mr. C. the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You will do me a great favour, sir, if you would furnish me with one." To this I replied, "Mr. C., you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, C——, the statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose."—"Alas! sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which

appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals. I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. M——. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor man begged food at the hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then returned it to her saying, "I am a poor man, it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things. Yours ever.

LETTER LIII.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.

WHEN I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this I must do, or I must make my packets more costly than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See then the true reason why I did not send you that same scribblement till you desired it. The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this—Is not your cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to show her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things indeed I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may well be contented to do little else. As when an ass, being harnessed with ropes to a sand-cart, drags with hanging ears his heavy burthen, neither filling the long echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicsome and airy, as asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensibly obliged to render into the best possible English metre, eight-and-forty Greek books, of which the two finest poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient if I may at last achieve that labour, and seldom allow myself those pretty little vagaries in which I should otherwise

delight, and of which, if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison; this is the reason why I produce at present but few occasional poems; and the preceding reason is that which may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise; if it runs readily into verse, and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well; otherwise it dies, and is forgotten; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday, I saw for the first time Bunbury's new print, *The Propagation of a Lie*. Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is I suppose the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot therefore be said to have humour without measure (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years), though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem, on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes, and in those features (for faces they can hardly be called), would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting, has been often observed; possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself

to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a musician be admitted of the party. He should compose the said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme; so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world die of laughing.

LETTER LIV.

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ. TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 1, 1788.

PARDON me, my dearest cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me to an insupportable degree; and that letter was written in one of them. A fog that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy; your letter has made it so, and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled! Oh Trouble! the portion of all mortals—but mine in particular—would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn: my pillows are stuffed with thee, my very roses smell of thee; and even my cousin,

who would cure me of all trouble if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble ; and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularly that I felt at that moment. I am in reality so far from thinking myself an ass, and my translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem, in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the ancients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain superiority to myself in this business ; and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them, by reading the first book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters and of taste. He dined with us, and the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed. I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which, when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin while I was in another room, that he had never entered

into the spirit of Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu! my dear: Will you never speak of coming to Weston more?

LETTER LV.

DR. BEATTIE TO THE HON. CHARLES BOYD.

Aberdeen, 16th November, 1766.

OF all the chagrins with which my present infirm state of health is attended, none afflicts me more than my inability to perform the duties of friendship. The offer which you were generously pleased to make of your correspondence flatters me extremely; but alas! I have not as yet been able to avail myself of it. While the good weather continued, I strolled about the country, and made many strenuous attempts to run away from this odious giddiness; but the more I struggled, the more closely it seemed to stick by me. About a fortnight ago the hurry of my winter business began; and at the same time my malady recurred with more violence than ever, rendering me at once incapable of reading, writing, and thinking. Luckily I am now a little better, so as to be able to read a page, and write a sentence or two without stopping; which, I assure you, is a very great matter. My hopes and my spirits begin to revive once more. I flatter myself I shall soon get rid

of this infirmity ; nay, that I shall ere long, be in the way of becoming a *great man*. For have I not head-aches, like Pope ? vertigo, like Swift ? grey hairs, like Homer ? Do I not wear large shoes (for fear of corns) like Virgil ? and sometimes complain of sore eyes (though not of *lippitude*), like Horace ? Am I not at this present writing invested with a garment not less ragged than that of Socrates ? Like Joseph the patriarch, I am a mighty dreamer of dreams ; like Nimrod the hunter, I am an eminent builder of castles (in the air). I procrastinate, like Julius Cæsar ; and very lately, in imitation of Don Quixote, I rode a horse, lean, old, and lazy, like Rosinante. Sometimes, like Cicero, I write bad verses ; and sometimes bad prose, like Virgil. This last instance I have on the authority of Seneca. I am of small stature, like Alexander the Great ; I am somewhat inclinable to fatness, like Dr. Arbuthnot and Aristotle ; and I drink brandy and water, like Mr. Boyd. I might compare myself, in relation to many other infirmities, to many other *great men* ; but if Fortune is not influenced in my favour by the particulars already enumerated, I shall despair of ever recommending myself to her good graces. I once had some thought of soliciting her patronage on the score of my resembling great men in their good qualities ; but I had so little to say on that subject, that I could not for my life furnish matter for one well-rounded period : and you know a short ill-turned speech is very improper to be used in an address to a female deity.

Do not you think there is a sort of antipathy between philosophical and poetical genius ? I

question whether any one person was ever eminent for both. Lucretius lays aside the poet when he assumes the philosopher, and the philosopher when he assumes the poet: in the one character he is truly excellent, in the other he is absolutely nonsensical. Hobbes was a tolerable metaphysician, but his poetry is the worst that ever was. Pope's "Essay on Man" is the finest philosophical poem in the world; but it seems to me to do more honour to the imagination than to the understanding of its author: I mean, its sentiments are noble and affecting, its images and allusions apposite, beautiful, and new; its wit transcendently excellent: but the scientific part of it is very exceptionable. Whatever Pope borrows from Leibnitz, like most other metaphysical theories, is frivolous and unsatisfying: what Pope gives us of his own, is energetic, irresistible, and divine. The incompatibility of philosophical and poetical genius is, I think, no unaccountable thing. Poetry exhibits the general qualities of a species; philosophy the particular qualities of individuals. *This* forms its conclusions from a painful and minute examination of single instances: *that* decides instantaneously, either from its own instinctive sagacity, or from a singular and unaccountable penetration, which at one glance sees all the instances which the philosopher must leisurely and progressively scrutinize, one by one. This persuades you gradually, and by detail; the other overpowers you in an instant by a single effort. Observe the effect of argumentation in poetry; we have too many instances of it in Milton: it transforms the noblest thoughts into drawling inferences, and the most

beautiful language into prose: it checks the tide of passion, by giving the mind a different employment in the comparison of ideas. A little philosophical acquaintance with the most beautiful parts of nature, both in the material and immaterial system, is of use to a poet, and gives grace and solidity to poetry; as may be seen in the “Georgics,” “the Seasons,” and “the Pleasures of Imagination:” but this acquaintance, if it is any thing more than superficial, will do a poet rather harm than good; and will give his mind that turn for minute observation which enfeebles the fancy by restraining it, and counteracts the native energy of judgment by rendering it fearful and suspicious.

LETTER LVI.

DR. BEATTIE TO MRS. INGLIS.

Aberdeen, 24th December, 1770.

WHILE I lived in your neighbourhood, I often wished for an opportunity of giving you my opinion on a subject, in which I know you are very deeply interested; but one incident or other always put it out of my power. That subject is the education of your son; whom, if I mistake not, it is now high time to send to some public place of education. I have thought much on this subject; I have weighed every argument that I could think of, on either side of the question. Much, you know, has been written upon it, and very plausible arguments have been offered, both for and against a public education. I set not much value upon these; spe-

culating men are continually disputing, and the world is seldom the wiser. I have some little experience in this way; I have no hypothesis to mislead me; and the opinion or prejudice which I first formed upon the subject, was directly contrary to that, which experience has now taught me to entertain.

Could mankind lead their lives in that solitude which is so favourable to many of our most virtuous affections, I should be clearly on the side of a private education. But most of us, when we go out into the world, find difficulties in our way, which good principles and innocence alone will not qualify us to encounter; we must have some address and knowledge of the world different from what is to be learned in books, or we shall soon be puzzled, disheartened, or disgusted. The foundation of this knowledge is laid in the intercourse of school-boys, or at least of young men at the same age. When a boy is always under the direction of a parent or tutor, he acquires such a habit of looking up to them for advice, that he never learns to think or act for himself: his memory is exercised, indeed in retaining their advice, but his invention is suffered to languish, till at last it becomes totally inactive. He knows, perhaps, a great deal of history or science; but he knows not how to conduct himself on those ever-changing emergencies, which are too minute and too numerous to be comprehended in any system of advice. He is astonished at the most common appearances, and discouraged with the most trifling (because unexpected) obstacles; and he is often at his wits' end, where a boy of much less knowledge, but more experience,

would instantly devise a thousand expedients. Conscious of his own superiority in some things, he wonders to find himself so much inferior in others; his vanity meets with continual rubs and disappointments, and disappointed vanity is very apt to degenerate into sullenness and pride: he despises, or affects to despise, his fellows, because, though superior in address, they are inferior in knowledge; and they, in their turn, despise that knowledge, which cannot teach the owner how to behave on the most common occasions. Thus he keeps at a distance from his equals, and they at a distance from him; and mutual contempt is the natural consequence.

Another inconvenience attending private education, is the suppressing of the principle of emulation, without which it rarely happens that a boy prosecutes his studies with alacrity or success. I have heard private tutors complain, that they were obliged to have recourse to flattery or bribery to engage the attention of their pupil; and I need not observe, how improper it is to set the example of such practices before children. True emulation, especially in young and ingenuous minds, is a noble principle; I have known the happiest effects produced by it; I never knew it to be productive of any vice. In all public schools it is, or ought to be, carefully cherished. Where it is wanting, in vain shall we preach up to children the dignity and utility of knowledge: the true appetite for knowledge is wanting; and when that is the case, whatever is crammed into the memory will rather surfeit and enfeeble, than improve the understanding. I do not mention the pleasure

which young people take in the company of one another, and what a pity it is to deprive them of it. I need not remark, that friendships of the utmost stability and importance have often been founded on school-acquaintance ; nor need I put you in mind, of what vast consequence to health are the exercises and amusements which boys contrive for themselves. I shall only observe further, that, when boys pursue their studies at home, they are apt to contract either a habit of idleness, or too close an attachment to reading ; the former breeds innumerable diseases, both in the body and soul : the latter, by filling young and tender minds with more knowledge than they can either retain or arrange properly, is apt to make them superficial and inattentive ; or, what is worse, to strain, and consequently impair, the faculties, by overstretching them. I have known several instances of both. The human mind is more improved by thoroughly understanding one science, one part of a science, or even one subject, than by a superficial knowledge of twenty sciences and a hundred different subjects ; and I would rather wish my son to be thoroughly master of “ Euclid’s Elements,” than to have the whole of “ Chambers’s Dictionary ” by heart.

The great inconvenience of public education arises from its being dangerous to morals. And indeed every condition and period of human life is liable to temptation. Nor will I deny that our innocence, during the first part of life, is much more secure at home, than any where else ; yet even at home, when we reach a certain age, it is not perfectly secure. Let young men be kept at

the greatest distance from bad company, it will not be easy to keep them from bad books, to which, in these days, all persons may have easy access at all times. Let us, however, suppose the best: that both bad books and bad company keep away, and that the young man never leaves his parents' or tutor's side, till his mind be well furnished with good principles, and himself arrived at the age of reflection and caution: yet temptations must come at last; and when they come, will they have the less strength, because they are new, unexpected, and surprising? I fear not. The more the young man is surprised, the more apt will he be to lose his presence of mind, and consequently the less capable of self-government. Besides, if his passions are strong, he will be disposed to form comparisons between his past state of restraint, and his present of liberty, very much to the disadvantage of the former. His new associates will laugh at him for his reserve and preciseness; and his unacquaintance with their manners, and with the world, as it will render him the more obnoxious to their ridicule, will also disqualify him the more, both for supporting it with dignity, and also for defending himself against it. Suppose him to be shocked with vice at its first appearance, and often to call to mind the good precepts he received in his early days; yet when he sees others daily adventuring upon it without any apparent inconvenience; when he sees them more gay (to appearance), and better received among all their acquaintance than he is; and when he finds himself hooted at, and in a manner avoided and despised, on account of his

singularity ; it is a wonder, indeed, if he persist in his first resolutions, and do not now at last begin to think, that though his former teachers were well-meaning people, they were by no means qualified to prescribe rules for his conduct. “The world,” he will say, “is changed since their time (and you will not easily persuade young people that it changes for the worse); we must comply with the fashion, and live like other folks, otherwise we must give up all hopes of making a figure in it.” And when he has got thus far, and begins to despise the opinions of his instructors, and to be dissatisfied with their conduct in regard to him, I need not add that the worst consequences may not unreasonably be apprehended. A young man, kept by himself at home, is never well known, even by his parents ; because he is never placed in those circumstances which alone are able effectually to rouse and interest his passions, and consequently to make his character appear. His parents, therefore, or tutors, never know his weak side, nor what particular advices or cautions he stands most in need of ; whereas, if he had attended a public school, and mingled in the amusements and pursuits of his equals, his virtues and his vices would have been disclosing themselves every day ; and his teachers would have known what particular precepts and examples it was most expedient to inculcate upon him. Compare those who have had a public education with those who have been educated at home ; and it will not be found, in fact, that the latter are, either in virtue or in talents, superior to the former. I speak, madam, from observation of fact, as well as from attending to the nature of the thing.

LETTER LVII.

DR. BEATTIE TO MRS. MONTAGUE.

Aberdeen, 15th October, 1773.

I PURPOSELY delayed for a few days to answer your letter, that I might be at leisure to think seriously before I should venture to give my opinion, in regard to the important matter, about which you did me the honour to consult me. A religious education is indeed the greatest of all earthly blessings to a young man; especially in these days, when one is in such danger of receiving impressions of a contrary tendency. I hope, and earnestly wish, that this, and every other blessing, may be the lot of your nephew, who seems to be accomplished and promising far beyond his years.

I must confess, I am strongly prepossessed in favour of that mode of education that takes place in the English universities. I am well aware at the same time, that in those seminaries, there are, to some young men, many more temptations to idleness and dissipation, than in our colleges in Scotland; but there are also, if I mistake not, better opportunities of study to a studious young man, and the advantages of a more respectable and more polite society, to such as are discreet and sober. The most valuable parts of human literature, I mean the Greek and Latin classics, are not so completely taught in Scotland as in England: and I fear it is no advantage, I have sometimes known it a misfortune, to those young men of distinction that come to study with us, that

they find too easy and too favourable an admittance to balls, assemblies, and other diversions of a like kind, where the fashion not only permits, but requires that a particular attention be paid to the younger part of the female world. A youth of fortune, with the English language, and English address, soon becomes an object of consideration to a raw girl; and equally so, perhaps though not altogether on the same account, to her parents. Our long vacations, too, in the colleges in Scotland, though a convenience to the native student (who commonly spends those intervals at home with his parents), are often dangerous to the students from England; who being then set free from the restraints of academical discipline, and at a distance from their parents or guardians, are too apt to forget, that it was for the purpose of study, not of amusement, they were sent into this country.

All, or most of these inconveniencies, may be avoided at an English university, provided a youth have a discreet tutor, and be himself of a sober and studious disposition. There, classical erudition receives all the attentions and honours it can claim: and there the French philosophy, of course, is seldom held in very high estimation; there, at present, a regard to religion is fashionable; there, the recluseness of a college life, the wholesome severities of academical discipline, the authority of the university, and several other circumstances I could mention, prove very powerful restraints to such of the youth as have any sense of true honour, or any regard to their real interest.

We, in Scotland, boast of our professors, that they give regular lectures in all the sciences, which

the students are obliged to attend ; a part of literary economy which is but little attended to in the universities of England. But I will venture to affirm from experience, that if a professor does no more than deliver a set of lectures, his young audience will be little the wiser for having attended him. The most profitable part of my time is that which I employ in examinations, or in Socraticál dialogue with my pupils, or in commenting upon ancient authors, all which may be done by a tutor in a private apartment, as well as by a professor in a public school. Lectures indeed I do, and must give ; in order to add solemnity to the truths I would inculcate ; and partly too, in compliance with the fashion, and for the sake of my own character, (for this, though not the most difficult part of our business, is that which shows the speaker to most advantage) ; but I have always found the other methods, particularly the Socratic form of dialogue, much more effectual in fixing the attention, and improving the faculties of the student.

I will not, madam, detain you longer with this comparison : it is my duty to give you my real sentiments, and you will be able to gather them from these imperfect hints. If it is determined that your nephew shall be sent to an university in Scotland, he may, I believe, have as good a chance for improvement at Edinburgh or Glasgow, as at any other : if the law is to form any part of his studies, he ought, by all means, to go to one or other of these places ; as we have no law-professors in any other part of this kingdom, except one in King's college, Aberdeen, whose office has been

a sinecure for several generations. Whether he should make choice of Edinburgh or of Glasgow, I am at loss to say: I was formerly well enough acquainted with the professors of both those societies, but, *tempora mutantur*. Dr. Reid is a very learned, ingenious, and worthy man; so is Dr. Blair: they are both clergymen; so that, I am confident, your nephew might lodge safely and profitably with either. Whether they would choose to accept of the office of tutor to any young gentleman, they themselves only can determine; some professors would decline it, on account of the laboriousness of their office: it is partly on this account, but chiefly on account of my health, that I have been obliged to decline every offer of this sort.

ELEGANT EPISTLES

FROM THE
MOST EMINENT
WRITERS,
BOOK VI, PART II:
RECENT.



Drawn by J. Goussier

Engraved by Romney

*And every Shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale*
page 166.

LONDON.
PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHARPE,
PICCADILLY.
& HECTOR M^r LEAN,
16. Salisbury Street, Strand



ELEGANT EPISTLES.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

Recent.

PART II.

LETTER I.*

MR. WARBURTON TO MR. HURD.

DEAR SIR, *Bedford-row, October 28th, 1749.*

I DEFERRED making my acknowledgments for the favour of your last obliging letter till I came to town. I am now got hither to spend the month

* The letters which follow between Warburton and Hurd would from their date have appeared with more propriety in the preceding volume; but from the multiplicity of letters belonging to the middle of the century, we were under the necessity of omitting them; they are however too excellent to be omitted entirely.

of November: the dreadful month of November! when the little wretches hang and drown themselves, and the great ones sell themselves to the C—— and the devil. I should be glad if any occasion would bring you hither, that I might have the pleasure of waiting on you,—I don't mean to the C—— and the devil, but in Bedford-row. Not that I would fright you from that earthly Pandemonium, a C——, because I never go thither. On the contrary, I wish I could get you into the *circle*. For (with regard to you) I should be something of the humour of honest Cornelius Agrippa, who when he left off conjuring, and wrote of the *vanity* of the art, could not forbear to give receipts, and teach young novices the way to raise the devil. One method serves for both, and his political representatives are rendered tractable by the very same method, namely, *fumigations*. But these high mysteries you are unworthy to partake of. You are no true son of Agrippa, who choose to waste your incense in raising the meagre spirit of friendship, when the wisdom of the prince of this world would have inspired you with more profitable sentiments.

Let me hear, at least, of your health; and believe that no absence can lessen what the expressions of your good-will have made me, that is to say, very much your servant.

I have now put that volume of which the epistle to Augustus is part, to the press; so should be obliged to you to send it by your letter-carrier, directed to Mr. Knapton, bookseller, in Ludgate-street. But you must be careful *not* to pay the carriage, because that will endanger a miscarriage,

as I have often experienced.—I intend to soften the conclusion of the note about Grotius and the archbishop, according to your friendly hint.

LETTER II.

MR. HURD TO DR. WARBURTON.

Shifnal, September 13th, 1755.

YOUR truly friendly letter of the 31st past, brought me all the relief I am capable of in my present situation. Yet that relief had been greater if the fact had been, as you suppose, that the best of fathers was removing from me, in this maturity of age, by a gradual insensible decay of nature; in which case, I could have drawn to myself much ease from the considerations you so kindly suggest to me. But it is not his being out of all hope of recovery (which I had known long since, and was prepared for), but his being in perpetual pain, that afflicts me so much. I left him last night in this disconsolate condition. So near a prospect of death, and so rough a passage to it—I own to you I cannot be a witness of this in one whom nature and ten thousand obligations have made so dear to me, without the utmost uneasiness. Nay, I think the very temper and firmness of mind with which he bears this calamity, sharpens my sense of it. I thank God, an attachment to this world has not as yet been among my greater vices. But were I as fond of it as prosperous and happy men sometimes are, what I have seen and

felt for this last month were enough to mortify such foolish affections. And in truth it would amaze one, that a few such instances as this, which hardly any man is out of the reach of, did not strike dead all the passions, were it not that Providence has determined, in spite of ourselves, by means of these instincts, to accomplish its own great purposes. But why do I trouble my best friend with this sad tale and rambling reflections? I designed only to tell him that I am quite unhappy here; and that, though it is more than time for me to return to Cambridge, I have no power of coming to a thought of leaving this place. However, a very few weeks, perhaps a few days, may put an end to this irresolution.

I thank you for your fine observation on the neglect to reform the ecclesiastical laws. It is a very material one, and deserves to be well considered. But of these matters when I return to my books, and my mind is more easy.

I wish you all the health and all the happiness your virtues deserve, and this wretched world will admit of. I know of nothing that reconciles me more to it than the sense of having such a friend as you in it. I have the greatest obligations to Mrs. Warburton and the rest of your family for their kind condolence. My best respects and sincerest good wishes attend them. I must ever be, &c.

R. HURD.

LETTER III.

DR. WARBURTON TO MR. HURD.

Bedford-row, September 24, 1755.

I RECEIVED your most tender letter, and sympathise with you most heartily.—Let me have better news.

A very disagreeable affair has brought me to town a month before my usual time. Mr. Knapton, whom every body, and I particularly, thought the richest bookseller in town, has failed. His debts are 20,000*l*, and his stock is valued at 30,000*l*. : but this value is subject to many abating contingencies ; and you never at first hear the whole debt. It is hoped there will be enough to pay every one: I don't know what to say to it. It is a business of years. He owes me a great sum. I am his principal creditor ; and as such I have had it in my power, at a meeting of his creditors, to dispose them favourably to him, and to get him treated with great humanity and compassion. I have brought them to agree unanimously to take a resignation of his effects, to be managed by trustees ; and in the mean time, till the effects can be disposed of to the best advantage, which will be some years in doing, to allow him a very handsome subsistence ; for I think him an honest man (though he has done extremely ill by me), and, as such, love him. He falls with the pity and compassion of every body. His fault was extreme indolence.

I was never more satisfied in any action of my

life than in my service of Mr. Knapton on this occasion, and the preventing (which I hope I have done) his being torn in pieces. Yet you must not be surprised, I am sure I should not, if you hear (so great is the world's love of truth and of me) that *my* severity to him destroyed his credit, and would have pushed him into extremity. I will assure you you have heard many things of me full as true; which, though at present apocryphal, may, by my never contradicting them, in time, become holy-writ, as the poet says.

God bless you, and believe me to be, &c.

LETTER IV.

MR. HURD TO DR. WARBURTON.

Cambridge, Dec. 1, 1755.

I HAVE to tell you that it has pleased God to release my poor father from his great misery. You will guess the rest, when I acquaint you that his case was cancerous. All his family have great reason to be thankful for his deliverance: and yet I find myself not so well prepared for the stroke as I had thought. I blame myself now for having left him. Though when I was with him, as I could not hide my own uneasiness, I saw it only added to his. I know not what to say. He was the best of men in all relations, and had a generosity of mind that was amazing in his rank of life. In his long and great affliction he showed a temper which philosophers only talk of. If he

had any foible, it was, perhaps, his too great fondness for the unworthiest of his sons.—My mother is better than could be expected from her melancholy attendance. Yet her health has suffered by it.—I have many letters to write, but would not omit communicating what so tenderly concerns me, to my best friend.

I thank you for your book and your kind letters. Mr. Balguy and I think much more hardly of Jortin than you do. I could say much of this matter at another time.

LETTER V.

DR. WARBURTON TO MR. HURD.

I OUGHT rather to rejoice with all who loved that good man lately released, than to condole with them. Can there be a greater consolation to all his friends than that he was snatched from human miseries to the reward of his labours? You I am sure must rejoice, amidst all the tenderness of filial piety and the softenings of natural affection; the gentle melancholy, that the incessant memory of so indulgent a parent and so excellent a man will make habitual, will be always brightened with the sense of his present happiness; where, perhaps, one of his pleasures is his ministering care over those which were dearest to him in life. I dare say this will be your case, because the same circumstances have made it mine. My great concern for you was while your father was languishing on his death-bed. And my concern at present is for your mother's grief and ill state of health.

True tenderness for your father, and the dread of adding to his distresses, absolutely required you to do what you did, and to retire from so melancholy a scene.

As I know your excellent nature, I conjure you by our friendship to divert your mind by the conversation of your friends, and the amusement of trifling reading, till you have fortified it sufficiently to bear the reflection on this common calamity of our nature, without any other emotion than that occasioned by a kind of soothing melancholy, which perhaps keeps it in a better frame than any other kind of disposition.

You see what man is, when never so little within the verge of matter and motion in a ferment. The affair of Lisbon has made men tremble, as well as the continent shake, from one end of Europe to another, from Gibraltar to the Highlands of Scotland. To suppose these desolations the scourge of heaven for human impieties, is a dreadful reflection; and yet to suppose ourselves in a forlorn and fatherless world, is ten times a more frightful consideration. In the first case, we may reasonably hope to avoid our destruction by the amendment of our manners; in the latter, we are kept incessantly alarmed by the blind rage of warring elements.

The relation of the captain of a vessel to the Admiralty, as Mr. Yorke told me the story, has something very striking in it. He lay off Lisbon on this fatal 1st of November, preparing to hoist sail for England. He looked toward the city in the morning, which gave the promise of a fine day, and saw that proud metropolis rise above the waves,

flourishing in wealth and plenty, and founded on a rock that promised a poet's eternity, at least, to its grandeur. He looked an hour after, and saw the city involved in flames, and sinking in thunder. A sight more awful mortal eyes could not behold on this side the day of doom. And yet does not human pride make us miscalculate? A drunken beggar shall work as horrid a desolation with a kick of his foot against an ant-hill, as subterraneous air and fermented minerals to a populous city. And if we take in the universe of things rather with a philosophic than a religious eye, where is the difference in point of real importance between them? A difference there is, and a very sensible one, in the merit of the two societies. The little Troglodytes amass neither superfluous nor imaginary wealth; and consequently have neither drones nor rogues amongst them. In the confusion, we see, caused by such a desolation, we find, by their immediate care to repair and remedy the general mischief, that none abandons himself to despair, and so stands not in need of bedlams and coroners' inquests; but, as the poet says,

“ In this 'tis God directs; in that, 'tis man.”

And you will say, remember the *sovereignty of reason*. To this I reply, that the common definition of man is false: he is not a *reasoning animal*. The best you can predicate of him is, that he is an *animal capable of reason*, and this too we take upon old tradition. For it has not been my fortune yet to meet, I won't say with any one man, but I may safely swear with any one order of men, who ever did reason.

LETTER VI.

THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER TO MR. HURD.

Grosvenor-square, Jan. 6, 1761.

I AM here alone, and have been so this fortnight. But I have the satisfaction to tell you that all the family are well at Prior Park, which I have the pleasure to believe is more agreeable to you to know, than any thing I could tell you from the great world; that is, from this great *congeries* of vice and folly.

Sherlock was much more to blame for not letting his chaplain understand early that he was a block-head by birth, than the chaplain for not giving his master the late intelligence that his parts were decayed by time; because the bishop, with all his infirmities of age, could see the one; but his chaplain, at his best, could never find out the other.

The *Poem on the Death of a Lady* I had communicated to me by lord Holderness. You may be sure I did not slip that opportunity of saying to the patron all that was fitting of the author and his poem. He considered what I said as flattering to himself, for he acquainted our friend that he had shown me the poem; as I understand by a letter I have received from Aston, pretty much to the same purpose with the account I had from you of that matter.

In asking after *addresses**, you ask after those *ephemera*, or water-flies, whose existence, the

* The Address of the Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese of Gloucester.--H.

naturalists tell us, is comprised within the compass of a summer's day. Indeed, these winter-flies have a still shorter date. Into what dark regions mine is retired, with the rest, I don't know. But if you would amuse yourself with my thoughts, for sixpence you may have my *Discourse on the Lord's Supper*; for, as small as the price is, it is too big to send you in my frank.

On this occasion, I will tell you what (though perhaps I may have told you before) I said in the drawing-room to a knot of courtiers in the old king's time. One chanced to say, he heard the king was not well. Hush, said colonel Robinson, it is not polite or decent to talk in this manner; the king is always well and in health; you are never to suppose that the diseases of his subjects ever approach his royal person. I perceive then, colonel, replied I, there is some difference between your master and mine. Mine was subject to all human infirmities, sin excepted: yours is subject to none, sin excepted. But as concerning my discourse, it is assuredly orthodox: so says the archbishop of Canterbury; and that I have demolished both Hoadly and Bossuet: for

“ 'Tis the same rope at either end they twist.”

The archbishop did not say this, but Mr. Pope. However, the archbishop says, what you are likely enough to say after him—that the people, for whom I intend this edition, are not likely to profit much by it.

Decay of parts all must have, if not feel, poets as well as priests: and it is true what was told you, that Voltaire has lately given evidence to this truth. What you say of this poet's turn would

make an excellent note to—*But, sage historians 'tis your part, &c.* and perhaps shall do so.

God bless you ; and, when you write next, let me know how your good mother does ; that is, whether her health continues such as not to increase your cares and anxieties.

LETTER VII.

MR. HURD TO THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

Thurcaston, Dec. 25, 1761.

THOUGH I troubled your lordship with a letter not long since, yet you will perhaps excuse my appearing before you, at this time, with my Christmas salutations : a good old custom, which shows our forefathers made a right use of the *best tidings* that ever came from heaven ; I mean, to increase *good will towards men*.

Your lordship will take a guess, from the sermonic cast of this sentence, at my late employment. Though I am not likely to be called upon in this way, I know not what led me to try my hand at a popular sermon or two : I say *popular*, because the subjects and manner of handling are such, but not of the sort that are proper for my Leicestershire *people*. To what purpose I have taken this trouble, your lordship may one day understand. For you, who are my example and guide in these exercises, must also be my judge. If you blame, I may learn to write better ; if you approve, I shall require no other *theatre*. But when does your lordship think to instruct us on this head, in the address to your clergy ? Certainly,

the common way of sermonizing is most wretched : neither sense, nor eloquence ; reason, nor pathos. Even our better models are very defective. I have lately turned over Dr. Clarke's large collection, for the use of my parish ; and yet, with much altering, and many additions, I have been able to pick out no more than eight or ten that I could think passable for that purpose. He is clear and happy enough in the explication of scripture ; but miserably cold and lifeless ; no invention, no dignity, no force ; utterly incapable of enlarging on a plain thought or of striking out new ones : in short, much less of a genius than I had supposed him.

'Tis well you have not my doings before you, while I am taking this liberty with my betters. But, as I said, your lordship shall one day have it in your power to revenge this flippancy upon me.

Your lordship has furnished me with a good part of my winter's entertainment, I mean by the books you recommended to me. I have read the Political Memoirs of Abbé St. Pierre. I am much taken with the old man : honest and sensible ; full of his projects, and very fond of them ; an immortal enemy to the glory of Louis the XIVth, I suppose, in part, from the memory of his disgrace in the academy, which no Frenchman could ever forget ; in short, like our Burnet, of some importance to himself, and a great talker. These, I think, are the outlines of his character. I love him for his generous sentiments, which in a churchman of his communion are the more commendable, and indeed make amends for the lay-bigotry of M. Crevier,

I have by accident got a sight of this mighty *Fingal*. I believe I mentioned my suspicions of the *Fragments*: they are ten-fold greater of this epic poem. To say nothing of the want of *external evidence*, or, which looks still worse, his shuffling over in such a manner the little evidence he pretends to give us, every page appears to me to afford *internal evidence* of forgery. His very citations of parallel passages *bear* again him. In poems of such rude antiquity, there might be some flashes of genius. But here they are continual, and clothed in very classical expression. Besides, no images, no sentiments, but what are matched in other writers, or may be accounted for from usages still subsisting, or well known from the story of other nations: in short, nothing but what the enlightened editor can well explain himself. Above all, what are we to think of a long epic poem, disposed, in form, into six books, with a *beginning, middle, and end*, and enlivened, in the classic taste, with episodes? Still this is nothing. What are we to think of a work of this length preserved and handed down to us entire, by *oral tradition*, for 1400 years without a chasm, or so much as a various reading, I should rather say, *speaking*? Put all this together, and if *Fingal* be not a forgery, convict; all I have to say is, that the sophists have a fine time of it. They may write, and lie on, with perfect security. And yet has this prodigy of North Britain set the world agape. Mr. Gray believes in it; and without doubt this Scotsman may persuade us, by the same arts, that *Fingal* is an original poem, as another employed to prove that Milton was a pla-

giary. But let James Macpherson beware the consequence. *Truth will out*, they say, and then—

“ Qui Bavium non odit, amet *tua carmina*, Mævi.”

My dear lord, excuse this rhapsody, which I write *currente calamo*; and let me hear that your lordship, Mrs. Warburton, and the dear boy, are perfectly well. I think to write by this post to Mr. Allen.

LETTER VIII.

THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER TO MR. HURD.

Grosvenor-square, Nov. 24, 1762.

MY DEAR RECTOR OF FOLKTON,*

THIS shall be only to remind you of what you may forget.

Imprimis, *your first fruits*. Your friend Pearson has put me in mind of this.

Item. Should you not write a letter of thanks to the chancellor, into whose favour you seem to have been much crept?

Item. Should you not write to the bishop of London, to thank him for his recommendation to his brothers?

Item. Should you not write a letter of thanks to the archbishop of York? I have sent you his letter enclosed.

* The sinecure rectory of Folkton, near Hunmanby, E. R. of Yorkshire, vacated by the translation of Dr. Osbaldiston from Carlisle to London, and given me by the chancellor, lord Northington, at the request of Mr. Allen.—H.

These, you will say, are like a tailor's items of stay-tape and canvass. But remember, a coat cannot be made without them. I say nothing to you of the public. You are too much a philosopher to turn your eyes downwards on the dissensions of the great; and I cannot dwell upon the subject with any satisfaction. I am afraid we are at the eve of much disturbance, and ready to exchange a war abroad for one at home, less murderous but more calumniating. We have long prayed to be delivered from our enemies; I wish the archbishop could hit upon an efficacious *form of prayer* to be delivered from ourselves. God bless you, and preserve the peace at Thurcaston, and in all its borders!

LETTER IX.

THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER TO MR. HURD.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

*Grosvenor-square,
March, 1765.*

You say true, I have a tenderness in my temper which will make me miss poor Stukeley; for, not to say that he was one of my oldest acquaintance, there was in him such a mixture of simplicity, drollery, absurdity, ingenuity, superstition, and antiquarianism, that he often afforded me that kind of well-seasoned repast, which the French call an *Ambigu*, I suppose from a compound of things never meant to meet together. I have often heard him laughed at by fools, who had nei-

ther his sense, his knowledge, nor his honesty; though it must be confessed, that in him they were all strangely travestied. Not a week before his death he walked from Bloomsbury to Grosvenor-square, to pay me a visit: was cheerful as usual, and as full of literary projects. But his business was (as he heard Geekie was not likely to continue long) to desire I would give him the earliest notice of his death, for that he intended to solicit for his prebend of Canterbury, by lord chancellor and lord Cardigan. "For," added he, "one never dies the sooner, you know, for seeking preferment."

You have had a curiosity, which I never shall have, of reading Leland's *Second Thoughts*. I believe what you say; they are as nonsensical as his first.

It is as you say of Percy's *Ballads*. Pray is this the man who wrote about the Chinese? Antiquarianism is, indeed, to true letters, what specious funguses are to the oak; which never shoot out and flourish till all the vigour and virtue of that monarch of the grove be effete, and near exhausted.

I envy the meeting of you three at *Thurcaston*; while I am confined here to the assemblies of pride and dulness.

I did mention to you, I think, the insult committed on the head of the supreme court of justice. The abuse was extreme, and much felt; generally resented, but I believe by nobody more than by me, as you will see by the enclosed. I have made what I had to say on that head, the conclusion of

my dedication*. It will please neither party. I was born to please no party. But what of that? In matters of moral conduct it is every honest man's chief concern to please himself.

P. S. When you have done with it, send it back.

LETTER X.

MR. JONES (AT THE AGE OF FOURTEEN) TO HIS
SISTER.

DEAR SISTER,

WHEN I received your letter I was very concerned to hear the death of your friend Mr. Reynolds, which I consider as a piece of affliction common to us both. For although my knowledge of his name or character is of no long date, and though I never had any personal acquaintance with him, yet (as you observe) we ought to regret the loss of every honourable man; and if I had the pleasure of your conversation I would certainly give you any consolatory advice that lay in my power, and make it my business to convince you what a real share I take in your chagrin. And yet, to reason philosophically, I cannot help thinking any grief upon a person's death very superfluous, and inconsistent with sense; for what is the cause of our sorrow? Is it because we hate the person deceased? that were to imply strange contradiction, to express our joy by the common signs of sorrow.

* To lord Mansfield.—H.

If, on the other hand, we grieve for one who was dear to us, I should reply that we should, on the contrary, rejoice at his having left a state so perilous and uncertain as life is. The common strain is; “’Tis pity so virtuous a man should die:”—but I assert the contrary; and when I hear the death of a person of merit, I cannot help reflecting, how happy he must be who now takes the reward of his excellencies, without the possibility of falling away from them and losing the virtue which he professed, on whose character death has fixed a kind of seal, and placed him out of the reach of vice and infamy! for death only closes a man’s reputation, and determines it as either good or bad. On the contrary, in life nothing is certain; whilst any one is liable to alteration, we may possibly be forced to retract our esteem for him, and some time or other he may appear to us as under a different light than what he does at present; for the life of no man can be pronounced either happy or miserable, virtuous or abandoned, before the conclusion of it. It was upon this reflection, that Solon, being asked by Cræsus, a monarch of immense riches, Who was the happiest man? answered, After your death I shall be able to determine. Besides, though a man should pursue a constant and determinate course of virtue, though he were to keep a regular symmetry and uniformity in his actions, and preserve the beauty of his reputation to the last, yet (while he lives) his very virtue may incur some evil imputation, and provoke a thousand murmurs of detraction; for, believe me, my dear sister, there is no instance of any virtue, or social excellence, which has not excited

the envy of innumerable assailants, whose acrimony is raised barely by seeing others pleased, and by hearing commendation which another enjoys. It is not easy in this life for any man to escape censure; and infamy requires very little labour to assist its circulation. But there is a kind of sanction in the characters of the dead, which gives due force and reward to their merits, and defends them from the suggestions of calumny. But to return to the point; What reason is there to disturb yourself on this melancholy occasion? do but reflect that thousands die every moment of time, that even while we speak, some unhappy wretch or other is either pining with hunger or pinched with poverty, sometimes giving up his life to the point of the sword, torn with convulsive agonies, and undergoing many miseries which it were superfluous to mention. We should therefore compare our afflictions with those who are more miserable, and not with those who are more happy. I am ashamed to add more, lest I should seem to mistrust your prudence; but next week, when I understand your mind is more composed, I shall write you word how all things go here. I designed to write you this letter in French, but I thought I could express my thoughts with more energy in my own language.

I come now, after a long interval, to mention some more private circumstances. Pray give my duty to my mamma, and thank her for my shirts. They fit, in my opinion, very well, though Biddy says they are too little in the arms. You may expect a letter from me every day in the week till I come home; for Mrs. Biscoe has desired it, and

has given me some franks. When you see her you may tell her that her little boy sends his duty to her, and Mr. Biscoe his love to his sister, and desires to be remembered to miss Cleeve: he also sends his compliments to my mamma and you. Upon my word, I never thought that our bleak air would have so good an effect upon him. His complexion is now ruddy, which before was sallow and pale, and he is indeed much grown: but I now speak of trifles, I mean in comparison of his learning; and indeed he takes that with wonderful acuteness; besides, his excessive high spirits increase mine, and give me comfort, since, after Parnell's departure, he is almost the only company I keep. As for news, the only article I know is, that Mrs. Par is dead and buried. Mr. and Mrs. Summer are well: the latter thanks you for bringing the letter from your old acquaintance, and the former has made me an elegant present. I am now very much taken up with study; am to speak Antony's speech in Shakspeare's Julius Cæsar (which play I will read to you when I come to town), and am this week to make a declamation. I add no more than the sincere well-wishes of your faithful friend, &c.

LETTER XI.

MR. JONES TO LADY SPENCER.

September 7, 1769.

THE necessary trouble of correcting the first printed sheets of my history, prevented me to-day from paying a proper respect to the memory of

Shakspeare, by attending his jubilee. But I was resolved to do all the honour in my power to as great a poet, and set out in the morning, in company with a friend, to visit a place where Milton spent some part of his life, and where, in all probability, he composed several of his earliest productions. It is a small village situated on a pleasant hill, about three miles from Oxford, and called Forest Hill, because it formerly lay contiguous to a forest, which has since been cut down. The poet chose this place of retirement after his first marriage, and he describes the beauties of his retreat in that fine passage of his *L'Allegro*:

Sometimes walking not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, or hillocks green.

* * * * *

While the ploughman near at hand,
Whistles oe'r the furrow'd land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe;
And every shepherd tells his tale,
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
While the landscape round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The lab'ring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees,
Bosom'd high in tufted trees.

* * * * *

Hard by, a cottage chimney smoaks,
From betwixt two aged oaks. &c.

It was neither the proper season of the year nor time of the day, to hear all the rural sounds and

see all the objects mentioned in this description ; but, by a pleasing concurrence of circumstances, we were saluted, on our approach to the village, with the music of the mower and his scythe ; we saw the ploughman intent upon his labour, and the milkmaid returning from her country employment.

As we ascended the hill, the variety of beautiful objects, the agreeable stillness and natural simplicity of the whole scene, gave us the highest pleasure. We at length reached the spot whence Milton undoubtedly took most of his images ; it is on the top of the hill, from which there is a most extensive prospect on all sides : the distant mountains that seemed to support the clouds, the villages and turrets, partly shaded by trees of the finest verdure, and partly raised above the groves that surrounded them, the dark plains and meadows of a greyish colour, where the sheep were feeding at large ; in short, the view of the streams and rivers, convinced us that there was not a single useless or idle word in the above-mentioned description, but that it was a most exact and lively representation of nature. Thus will this fine passage, which has always been admired for its elegance, receive an additional beauty from its exactness. After we had walked, with a kind of poetical enthusiasm, over this enchanted ground, we returned to the village.

The poet's house was close to the church ; the greatest part of it has been pulled down, and what remains, belongs to an adjacent farm. I am informed that several papers in Milton's own hand were found by the gentleman who was last in pos-

session of the estate. The tradition of his having lived there is current among the villagers: one of them showed us a ruinous wall that made part of his chamber; and I was much pleased with another, who had forgotten the name of Milton, but recollected him by the title of *The Poet*.

It must not be omitted, that the groves near this village are famous for nightingales, which are so elegantly described in the *Penseroso*. Most of the cottage windows are overgrown with sweetbriars, vines, and honeysuckles; and that Milton's habitation had the same rustic ornament we may conclude from his description of the lark bidding him good-morrow,

Thro' the sweetbriar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine:

for it is evident that he meant a sort of honeysuckle by the eglantine, though that word is commonly used for the sweetbriar, which he could not mention twice in the same couplet.

If I ever pass a month or six weeks at Oxford in the summer, I shall be inclined to hire and repair this venerable mansion, and to make a festival for a circle of friends, in honour of Milton, the most perfect scholar, as well as the sublimest poet, that our country ever produced. Such an honour will be less splendid, but more sincere and respectful, than all the pomp and ceremony on the banks of the Avon. I have, &c.

LETTER XII.

MR. JONES TO N. B. HALHED.

Nice, March 1, 1770.

I RECEIVED your short letter with great pleasure, as it convinced me that you were not insensible of my esteem for you, and such as resemble you. I wrote immediately to my friends, as you desired, most earnestly requesting them to promote your views, as if my own interest were concerned; if they accede to my wishes in this respect they will oblige me and themselves too; for doubtless I shall be ready to make them every return that I can. I think, however, that I shall have it in my power to serve you more effectually, after my return to England; and I beg you to believe, that no inclination or efforts on my part shall ever be wanting to promote your wishes.

My health is good; but I long for those enjoyments of which I know not well how to bear the privation. When I first arrived here I was delighted with a variety of objects, rarely, if ever, seen in my own country,—olives, myrtles, vineyards, pomegranates, palms, aromatic plants, and a surprising variety of the sweetest flowers, blooming in the midst of winter. But the attraction of novelty has ceased; I am now satiated, and begin to feel somewhat of disgust. The windows of our inn are scarcely thirty paces from the sea, and, as Ovid beautifully says—

Tired, on the uniform expanse I gaze.

I have, therefore, no other resource than, with Cicero, to count the waves ; or, with Archimedes and Archytas, to measure the sands. I cannot describe to you how weary I am of this place, nor my anxiety to be again at Oxford, where I might jest with you or philosophize with Poore. If it be not inconvenient, I wish you would write to me often, for I long to know how you and our friends are : but write if you please in Latin, and with gaiety, for it grieves me to observe the uneasiness under which you appear to labour. Let me ever retain a place in your affection, as you do in mine ; continue to cultivate polite literature ; woo the muses : reverence philosophy ; and give your days and nights to composition, with a due regard, however, to the preservation of your health.

LETTER XIII.

MR. JONES TO C. REVICZKI.

March, 1771.

A PLAGUE on our men in office, who for six months have amused me with idle promises, which I see no prospect of their fulfilling, that they would forward my books and a letter to you ! They say, that they have not yet had an opportunity ; and that the apprehension of a Spanish war (which is now no more) furnishes them with incessant occupation. I have however so much to say to you, that I can no longer delay writing ; I wish indeed I could communicate it in person. On my late

return to England, I found myself entangled, as it were, in a variety of important considerations. My friends, companions, relations, all attacked me with urgent solicitations to banish poetry and Oriental literature for a time, and apply myself to oratory and the study of the law ; in other words, to become a barrister, and pursue the track of ambition. Their advice in truth was conformable to my own inclinations ; for the only road to the highest station in this country is that of the law ; and I need not add, how ambitious and laborious I am. Behold me then become a lawyer, and expect in future, that my correspondence will have somewhat more of public business in it. But if it ever should be my fortune to have any share in administration, you shall be my Atticus, the partner of my plans, the confidant of my secrets. Do not however suppose, that I have altogether renounced polite literature. I intend shortly to publish my English poems ; and I mean to bring my tragedy of Soliman on the stage, when I can find proper actors for the performance of it. I intend also composing an epic poem, on a noble subject, under the title of Britanneis : but this I must defer until I have more leisure, with some degree of independence. In the mean time, I amuse myself with the choicest of the Persian poets ; and I have the good fortune to possess many manuscripts, which I have either purchased or borrowed from my friends, on various subjects, including history, philosophy, and some of the most celebrated poetry of Persia.

* * * * *

Do not however imagine that I despise the usual enjoyments of youth ; no one can take more de-

light in singing and dancing than I do, nor in the moderate use of wine, nor in the exquisite beauty of the ladies, of whom London affords an enchanting variety; but I prefer glory, my supreme delight, to all other gratifications, and I will pursue it through fire and water, by day and by night. Oh! my Charles (for I renounce all ceremony, and address you with ancient simplicity), what a boundless scene opens to my view! if I had two lives I should scarcely find time for the due execution of all the public and private projects which I have in mind!

LETTER XIV.

MR. JONES TO J. WILMOT, ESQ.

MY DEAR WILMOT,

*Univ. Coll. Oxford, 3rd
of June, 1771.*

It makes me very happy to hear that my lord chief justice does not retire on account of ill health, but from a motive which does him the highest honour. He will now enjoy the greatest happiness of human life, ease with dignity, after having passed through the most honourable labour without danger. I should think myself highly blessed if I could pursue a similar course in my small sphere, and after having raised a competency at the bar, could retire to the bowers of learning and the arts.

I have just begun to contemplate the stately edifice of the laws of England,—

“The gather’d wisdom of a thousand years,”

if you will allow me to parody a line of Pope. I do not see why the study of the law is called dry and unpleasant; and I very much suspect that it seems so to those only who would think any study unpleasant which required a great application of the mind, and exertion of the memory. I have read most attentively the two first volumes of "Blackstone's Commentaries," and the two others will require much less attention. I am much pleased with the care he takes to quote his authorities in the margin, which not only give a sanction to what he asserts, but point out the sources to which the student may apply for more diffusive knowledge. I have opened two common-place books, the one of the law, the other of oratory, which is surely too much neglected by our modern speakers. I do not mean the popular eloquence which cannot be tolerated at the bar, but that correctness of style and elegance of method which at once pleases and persuades the hearer. But I must lay aside my studies for about six weeks, while I am printing my Grammar, from which a good deal is expected; and which I must endeavour to make as perfect as a human work can be. When that is finished I shall attend the Court of King's Bench very constantly, and shall either take a lodging in Westminster, or accept the invitation of a friend in Duke-street, who has made me an obliging offer of apartments.

I am sorry the characters you sent me are not Persian but Chinese, which I cannot decipher without a book, which I have not at present, but *tous Chinois qu'ils sont*, I shall be able to make them out when the weather will permit me to sit

in the Bodleian. In the mean time, would advise you to inquire after a native of China, who is now in London; I cannot recollect where he lodges, but shall know when I come to town, which will be to-morrow or Saturday. I shall be at Richardson's till my Grammar is finished, unless I can buy a set of chambers in the Temple, which I fear will be difficult. I will certainly call upon you in a day or two. On one of the Indian pictures at your house, there was a beautiful copy of Persian verses, which I will beg leave to transcribe, and should be glad to print it, with a translation, in the Appendix to my Grammar. I have not yet had my Persian proposals engraved; but when you write to your brother you would much oblige me by desiring him to send me a little Persian manuscript, if he can procure it without much trouble. It is a small poem which I intend to print; we have six or seven copies of it at Oxford, but if I had one in my possession it would save me the trouble of transcribing it. I have inclosed its title in Persian and English. I am very glad that your family are well. I wish them joy upon every occasion; my mother and sister desire their compliments to you, and I am, with great regard, yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

MR. JONES TO LORD ALTHORPE.

Temple, Oct. 13, 1778.

MY dear lord, captain, and friend (of all which titles no man entertains a juster idea than your-

self), how shall I express the delight which your letter from Warley camp has given me? I cannot sufficiently regret, that I was so long deprived of that pleasure; for, intending to be in London soon after the circuit, I had neglected to leave any directions here about my letters; so that yours has lain almost a month upon my table, where I found it yesterday on my return from the country. I ought indeed to have written first to you, because I was a rambler, you stationary; and because the pen has been my peculiar instrument, as the sword has been yours, this summer; but the agitation of forensic business, and the sort of society in which I have been forced to live, afforded me few moments of leisure, except those in which nature calls for perfect repose, and the spirits exhausted with fatigue require immediate reparation. I rejoice to see that you are a votary, as Archilocus says of himself, both of the Muses and of Mars; nor do I believe that a letter full of more manly sentiments, or written with more unaffected elegance, than yours, has often been sent from a camp. You know I have set my mind on your being a fine speaker in next parliament, in the cause of true constitutional liberty, and your letters convince me that I shall not be disappointed. To this great object, both for your own glory and your country's good, your present military station will contribute not a little: for a soldier's life naturally inspires a certain spirit and confidence, without which the finest elocution will not have a full effect. Not to mention Pericles, Xenophon, Cæsar, and a hundred other eloquent soldiers among the ancients, I am persuaded that Pitt (whom by the way I am

far from comparing to Pericles) acquired his forcible manner in the field where he carried the colours. This I mention in addition to the advantages of your present situation, which you very justly point out : nor can I think your summer in any respect uselessly spent, since our constitution has a good defence in a well-regulated militia, officered by men who love their country : and a militia so regulated, may in due time be the means of thinning the formidable standing army, if not of extinguishing it. Captain *** is one of the worthiest as well as tallest men in the kingdom ; but he, and his Socrates, Dr. Johnson, have such prejudices in politics, that one must be upon one's guard in their company, if one wishes to preserve their good opinion. By the way, the dean of Gloucester has printed a work which he thinks a full confutation of " Locke's Theory of Government ;" and his second volume will contain a new Theory of his own : of this, when we meet. The disappointment to which you allude, and concerning which you say so many friendly things to me, is not yet certain. My competitor is not yet named ; many doubt whether he will be ; I think he will not, unless the chancellor should press it strongly. It is still the opinion and wish of the bar, that I should be the man. I believe the minister hardly knows his own mind. I cannot legally be appointed till January, or next month at soonest, because I am not a barrister of five years standing till that time : now many believe that they keep the place open for me till I am qualified. I certainly wish to have it, because I wish to have twenty thousand pounds in my pocket before I am eight-and-thirty

years old; and then I might contribute in some little degree towards the service of my country in parliament, as well as at the bar, without selling my liberty to a patron, as too many of my profession are not ashamed of doing; and I might be a speaker in the house of commons in the full vigour and maturity of my age: whereas, in the slow career of Westminster-hall, I should not perhaps, even with the best success, acquire the same independent station till the age at which Cicero was killed. But be assured, my dear lord, that if the minister be offended at the style at which I have spoken, do speak, and will speak of public affairs, and on that account should refuse to give me the judgeship, I shall not be at all mortified, having already a very decent competence, without a debt or a care of any kind. I will not break in upon you at Warley unexpectedly; but whenever you find it most convenient, let me know, and I will be with you in less than two hours.

LETTER XVI.

MR. JONES TO LORD ALTHORPE.

Temple, Feb. 4, 1780.

THE public piety having given me this afternoon what I rarely can obtain, a short intermission of business, can I employ my leisure more agreeably than in writing to my friend? I shall send my letter at random, not knowing whether you are at Althorpe or at Buckingham, but persuading my-

self that it will find you without much delay. May I congratulate you and our country on your entrance on the great career of public life? If there was a time when men of spirit, sense, and virtue, ought to stand forth, it is the present. I am informed that you have attended some county meetings, and are on some committees. Did you find it necessary or convenient to speak on the state of the nation? It is a noble subject, and with your knowledge as well as judgment, you will easily acquire habits of eloquence; but *habits* they are, no less than playing on a musical instrument, or handling a pencil: and as the best musicians and finest painters began with playing sometimes out of tune and drawing out of proportion, so the greatest orators must begin with leaving some periods unfinished, and perhaps with sitting down in the middle of a sentence. It is only by continued use that a speaker learns to express his ideas with precision and soundness, and to provide at the beginning of a period for the conclusion of it: but to this facility of speaking, the habit of writing rapidly contributes in a wonderful degree. I would particularly impress this truth upon your mind, my dear friend, because I am fully convinced that an Englishman's real importance in his country, will always be in a compound ratio of his virtue, his knowledge, and his eloquence; without all of which qualities little real utility can result from either of them apart; and I am no less persuaded, that a virtuous and knowing man, who has no natural impediment, may by habit acquire perfect eloquence, as certainly as a healthy man who has the use of his muscles, may learn to swim or to skate. When

shall we meet, and where, that we may talk over these and other matters? There are some topics which will be more properly discussed in conversation than upon paper, I mean on account of their copiousness; for believe me I should not be concerned, if all that I write were copied at the post-office, and read before the king in council.

* * * * *

At the same time I solemnly declare, that I will not enlist under the banners of a party: a declaration which is, I believe, useless, because no party would receive a man, determined as I am to think for himself. To you alone, my friend, and to your interests, I am firmly attached, both from early habit and from mature reason; from ancient affection unchanged for a single moment, and from a full conviction that such affection was well placed. The views and wishes of all other men, I will analyze and weigh with that suspicion and slowness of belief, which my experience, such as it is, has taught me; and to be more particular, although I will be jealous of the *regal* part of our constitution, and always lend an arm towards restraining its proud waves within due limits, yet my most vigilant and strenuous efforts shall be directed against any oligarchy that may rise; being convinced, that on the popular part of every government depends its real force, the obligation of its laws, its welfare, its security, its permanence. I have been led insensibly to write more seriously than I had intended; my letters shall not always be so dull; but with so many public causes of grief or of resentment, who can at all times be gay?

LETTER XVII.

MR. JONES TO LORD ALTHORPE.

Jan. 5, 1782.

O la bella cosa il far niente! This was my exclamation, my dear lord, on the 12th of last month, when I found myself, as I thought, at liberty to be a rambler, or an idler, or any thing I pleased: but my *mal di gola* took ample revenge for my abuse and contempt of it, when I wrote to you, by confining me twelve days with a fever and quinsey: and I am now so cramped by the approaching session at Oxford, that I cannot make any long excursion. I inclose my tragical song of "A shepherdess going," with Mazzanti's music, of which my opinion at present is, that the modulation is very artificial, and the harmony good, but that Pergolesi (whom the modern Italians are such puppies as to undervalue) would have made it more pathetic and *heart-rending*, if I may compose such word. I long to hear it sung by Mrs. Poyntz. Pray present the inclosed, in my name, to lady Althorpe. I hope that I shall in a short time be able to think of you, when I read these charming lines of Catullus*:

* The original is quoted by Mr. Jones:—

Torquatus volo parvulus,
Matris è gremio suæ
Porrigens teueras manus,
Dulce rideat ad patrem,
Semi-hiante labello.

“ And soon to be completely bless’d,
Soon may a young *Torquatus* rise;
Who, hanging on his mother’s breast,
To his known sire shall turn his eyes,
Out stretch his infant arms awhile,
Half-ope his little lips and smile.”

(*Printed Translation.*)

What a beautiful picture! can *Dominichino* equal it? How weak are all arts in comparison of poetry and rhetoric! Instead however of *Torquatus*, I would read *Spencerus*. Do you not think that I have discovered the true use of the fine arts, namely, in relaxing the mind after toil? Man was born for *labour*; his configuration, his passions, his restlessness, all prove it; but labour would wear him out, and the purpose of it be defeated, if he had not intervals of *pleasure*; and unless that pleasure be *innocent*, both he and society must suffer. Now what pleasures are more harmless, if they be nothing else, than those afforded by polite arts and polite literature? Love was given us by the Author of our being as the reward of virtue, and the solace of care; but the base and sordid forms of *artificial* (which I oppose to *natural*) society in which we live, have encircled that heavenly rose with so many thorns, that the wealthy alone can gather it with prudence. On the other hand, mere pleasure, to which the idle are not justly entitled, soon satiates, and leaves a vacuity in the mind more unpleasant than actual pain. A just mixture, or interchange of labour and pleasure, appears alone conducive to such happiness as this life affords. Farewel. I have no room to add my useless name, and still more useless professions of friendship.

LETTER XVIII.

MR. JONES TO MR. THOMAS YEATES.

SIR,

Lamb's Buildings, April 25, 1782.

IT was not till within these very few days that I received on my return from the circuit, your obliging letter, dated the 18th of March, which, had I been so fortunate as to have received earlier, I should have made a point of answering immediately. The society for constitutional information, by electing me one of their members, will confer upon me an honour which I am wholly unconscious of deserving, but which is so flattering to me, that I accept of their offer with pleasure and gratitude. I should indeed long ago have testified my regard for so useful an institution by an offer of my humble service in promoting it, if I had not really despaired in my present situation of being able to attend your meetings as often as I should ardently wish.

My future life shall certainly be devoted to the support of that excellent constitution, which it is the object of your society to unfold and elucidate; and from this resolution, long and deliberately made, no prospects, no connexion, no station here or abroad, no fear of danger, or hope of advantage to myself, shall ever deter or allure me.

A form of government so apparently conducive to the true happiness of the community, must be admired as soon as it is understood; and if reason and virtue have any influence in human breasts, ought to be preserved by any exertions, and at

any hazard. Care must now be taken, lest by reducing the regal power to its just level, we raise the aristocratical to a dangerous height; since it is from the people that we can deduce the obligation of our laws, and the authority of magistrates.

On the people depend the welfare, the security, and the permanence of every legal government; in the people must reside all substantial power; and to the people must all those, in whose ability and knowledge we sometimes wisely, often imprudently, confide, be always accountable for the due exercise of that power with which they are for a time intrusted.

If the properties of all good government be considered as duly distributed in the different parts of our limited republic, goodness ought to be the distinguished attribute of the crown, wisdom of the aristocracy, but power and fortitude of the people.

May justice and humanity prevail in them all! I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

SIR WILLIAM JONES TO LORD ASHBURTON.

April 27, 1783.

YOUR kind letter found me on board the Crocodile: I should have been very unhappy had it missed me, since I have long habituated myself to set the highest value on every word you speak, and every line you write. Of the two inclosed letters to our friends, Impey and Chambers, I will

take the greatest care, and will punctually follow your directions as to the first of them. My departure was sudden indeed ; but the Admiralty were so anxious for the sailing of this frigate, and their orders were so peremptory, that it was impossible to wait for any thing but a breeze. Our voyage has hitherto been tolerably pleasant, and since we left the Channel, very quick. We begin to see albicores about the ship, and to perceive an agreeable change of climate. Our days, though short, give me ample time for study, recreation, and exercise ; but my joy and delight proceed from the surprising health and spirits of Anna Maria, who joins me in affectionate remembrance to lady Ashburton. As to you, my dear lord, we consider you as the spring and fountain of our happiness, as the author and parent (a Roman would have added, what the coldness of our northern language will hardly admit), the *god* of our fortunes. It is possible indeed, that by incessant labour and irksome attendance at the bar, I might in due time have attained all that my very limited ambition could aspire to ; but in no other station than that which I owe to your friendship, could I have gratified at once my boundless curiosity concerning the people of the East, continued the exercise of my profession, in which I sincerely delight, and enjoyed at the same time the comforts of domestic life. The grand jury of Denbighshire, have found, I understand, the bill against the dean of St. Asaph, for publishing my dialogue ; but as an indictment for a theoretical essay on government was I believe never before known, I have no apprehension for the consequences. As to the doc-

trines in the tract, though I shall certainly not preach them to the Indians, who must and will be governed by absolute power, yet I shall go through life with a persuasion, that they are just and rational; that substantial freedom is both the daughter and parent of virtue; and that virtue is the only source of public and private felicity. Farewel.

LETTER XX.

SIR WILLIAM JONES TO SIR JOSEPH BANKS.

DEAR SIR JOSEPH,

Sept. 17, 1789.

THE season for paying my annual epistolary rents being returned with the rough gales of the autumnal equinox, I am eager to offer my tribute where it is most due, to my best landlord, who, instead of claiming, like the India company, sixteen shillings in the pound for the neat profits of my farm (I speak correctly, though metaphorically), voluntarily offers me indulgencies, even if I should run in arrears.

You have received, I trust, the pods of the finest Dacca cotton, with which the commercial resident at that station supplied me, and which I sent by different conveyances, some inclosed to yourself, some to sir George Young, and some by private hands. But I have always found it safer to send letters and small parcels by the public packet, than by careless and inconsiderate individuals. I am not partial to the *pryangu*, which I now find is its true name; but Mr. Shore found

benefit from it, and procured the fresh plants from Arracan, which died unluckily in their way to Calcutta. But seriously, it deserves a longer trial before its tonic virtues, if it have any, can be ascertained. It is certainly not so fine a bitter as camomile or columbo root.

I wish politics at the devil, but hope that, when the king recovered, science revived. It gives me great pain to know, that *party* as it is called (I call it faction, because I hold party to be grounded on principles, and faction on self-interest, which excludes all principle) has found its way into a literary club, who meet reciprocally to impart and receive new ideas. I have deep-rooted political principles, which the law taught me: but I should never think of introducing them among men of science; and if, on my return to Europe ten or twelve years hence, I should not find more science than politics in the club, my seat in it will be at the service of any politician who may wish to be one of the party.

An intimate friend of Mr. Blane has written to him, at my request, for the newly discovered fragrant grass; and should the plants be sent before the last ships of the season sail, they shall be sent to you. Whether they be the nard of the ancients, I must doubt, because we have sweet grasses here of innumerable species; and Reuben Burrow brought me an odoriferous grass from the place where the Ganges enters India, and where it covers whole acres, and perfumes the whole country. From his account of it, I suspect it to be Mr. Blane's; but I could make nothing of the dry specimens, except that they differed widely from the

Jatamansi, which I am persuaded is the Indian nard of Ptolemy. I can only procure the dry *Jatamansi*, but if I can get the stalks, roots, and flowers from Butan, I will send them to you. Since the death of Kœnig, we are in great want of a professed botanist. I have twice read with rapture the "*Philosophia Botanica*," and have Murray's edition of the "*Genera et Species Plantarum*" always with me; but, as I am no lynx, like Linnæus, I cannot examine minute blossoms, especially those of grasses.

We are far advanced in the second volume of our "*Transactions*."

LETTER XXI.

SIR WILLIAM JONES TO SIR J. MACPHERSON, BART.

Chrishna-nagur, Oct. 15, 1790.

I GIVE you hearty thanks for your postscript, which (as you enjoin secrecy) I will only allude to ambiguously, lest this letter should fall into other hands than yours. Be assured, that what I am going to say does not proceed from an imperfect sense of your kindness, but really I want no addition to my fortune, which is enough for me; and if the whole legislature of Britain were to offer me a different station from that which I now fill, should most gratefully and respectfully decline it. The character of an ambitious judge, is, in my opinion, very dangerous to public justice; and if I were a sole legislator, it should be enacted, that every judge, as well as every bishop, should re-

main for life in the place which he first accepted. This is not the language of a cynic, but of a man who loves his friends, his country, and mankind; who knows the short duration of human life, recollects that he has lived four-and-forty years, and has learned to be contented. Of public affairs you will receive better intelligence than I am able to give you. My private life is similar to that which you remember: seven hours a day on an average are occupied by my duties as a magistrate, and one hour to the new Indian digest, and for one hour in the evening I read aloud to lady Jones. We are now travelling to the sources of the Nile with Mr. Bruce, whose work is very interesting and important. The second volume of the "Asiatic Transactions" is printed, and the third ready for the press. I jabber Sanscrit every day with the pundits, and hope, before I leave India, to understand it as well as I do Latin. Among my letters I find one directed to you; I have unsealed it; and though it only shows that I was not inattentive to the note with which you favoured me on the eve of your departure, yet I annex it because it was yours, though brought back by my servant.

The latter part of it will raise melancholy ideas; but death, if we look at it firmly, is only a change of place; every departure of a friend is a sort of death; and we are all continually dying and reviving. We shall all meet: I hope to meet you again in India; but wherever we meet, I expect to see you well and happy. None of your friends can wish for your health and happiness more ardently than, my dear sir, &c.

LETTER XXII.

DAVID HUME, ESQ. TO ———.

SIR,

Edinburgh, Aug. 16, 1760.

I AM not surprised to find by your letter, that Mr. Gray should have entertained suspicions with regard to the authenticity of these fragments of our Highland poetry. The first time I was shown the copies of some of them in manuscript, by our friend John Home, I was inclined to be a little incredulous on that head; but Mr. Home removed my scruples, by informing me of the manner in which he procured them from Mr. Macpherson, the translator. These two gentlemen were drinking the waters together at Moffat last autumn; when their conversation fell upon Highland poetry, which Mr. Macpherson extolled very highly. Our friend, who knew him to be a good scholar, and a man of taste, found his curiosity excited; and asked whether he had ever translated any of them? Mr. Macpherson replied that he never had attempted any such thing; and doubted whether it was possible to transfuse such beauties into our language; but for Mr. Home's satisfaction, and in order to give him a general notion of the strain of that wild poetry, he would endeavour to turn one of them into English. He accordingly brought him one next day; which our friend was so much pleased with, that he never ceased soliciting Mr. Macpherson till he insensibly produced that small volume which has been published.

After this volume was in every body's hands,

and universally admired, we heard every day new reasons, which put the authenticity, not the great antiquity, which the translator ascribes to them, beyond all question: for their antiquity is a point which must be ascertained by reasoning; though the arguments he employs seem very probable and convincing. But certain it is, that these poems are in every body's mouth in the Highlands, have been handed down from father to son, and are of an age beyond all memory and tradition.

In the family of every Highland chieftain there was anciently retained a bard, whose office was the same with that of the Greek rhapsodists; and the general subjects of the poems which they recited, was the wars of Fingal; an epoch no less celebrated among them, than the wars of Troy among the Greek poets. This custom is not yet altogether abolished; the bard and piper are esteemed the most honourable offices in a chieftain's family, and these two characters are frequently united in the same person. Adam Smith, the celebrated professor in Glasgow, told me, that the piper of the Argyleshire militia repeated to him all those poems, which Mr. Macpherson has translated, and many more of equal beauty. Major Mackay, lord Rae's brother, also told me, that he remembers them perfectly; as likewise did the laird of Macfarlane, the greatest antiquarian whom we have in this country, and who insists so strongly on the historical truth, as well as on the poetical beauty of these productions. I could add the laird and lady Macleod to these authorities, with many more, if these were not sufficient; as they live in different parts of the Highlands, very re-

mote from each other, and they could only be acquainted with poems that had become in a manner national works, and had gradually spread themselves into every mouth, and imprinted on every memory.

Every body in Edinburgh is so convinced of this truth, that we have endeavoured to put Mr. Macpherson on a way of procuring us more of these wild flowers. He is a modest sensible young man, not settled in any living, but employed as a private tutor in Mr. Graham of Balgowan's family, a way of life which he is not fond of. We have therefore set about a subscription of a guinea, or two guineas a-piece, in order to enable him to quit that family, and undertake a mission into the Highlands, where he hopes to recover more of these Fragments. There is, in particular, a country surgeon somewhere in Lochaber, who, he says, can recite a great number of them, but never committed them to writing; as indeed the orthography of the Highland language is not fixed, and the natives have always employed more the sword than the pen. This surgeon has by heart the epic poem mentioned by Mr. Macpherson in his preface; and as he is somewhat old, and is the only person living that has it entire, we are in the more haste to recover a monument, which will certainly be regarded as a curiosity in the republic of letters.

I own, that my first and chief objection to the authenticity of these Fragments, was not on account of the noble and even tender strokes which they contain; for these are the offspring of Genius and Passion in all countries; I was only sur-

prised at the regular plan which appears in some of these pieces, and which seems to be the work of a more cultivated age. None of the specimens of barbarous poetry known to us, the Hebrew, Arabian, or any other, contained this species of beauty : and if a regular epic poem, or even any thing of that kind, nearly regular, should also come from that rough climate, or uncivilized people, it would appear to me a phenomenon altogether unaccountable.

I remember, Mr. Macpherson told me, that the heroes of this Highland epic were not only like Homer's heroes, their own butchers, bakers, and cooks, but also their own shoe-makers, carpenters, and smiths. He mentioned an incident, which put this matter in a remarkable light. A warrior has the head of his spear struck off in battle ; upon which he immediately retires behind the army, where a forge was erected ; makes a new one ; hurries back to the action ; pierces his enemy, while the iron, which was yet red-hot, hisses in the wound. This imagery you will allow to be singular, and so well imagined, that it would have been adopted by Homer, had the manners of the Greeks allowed him to have employed it.

I forgot to mention, as another proof of the authenticity of these poems, and even of the reality of the adventures contained in them, that the names of the heroes, Fingal, Oscur, Osur, Oscan, Dermid, are still given in the Highlands to large mastiffs, in the same manner as we affix to them the names of Cæsar, Pompey, Hector ; or the French that of Marlborough.

It gives me pleasure to find, that a person of so

fine a taste as Mr. Gray approves of these Fragments, as it may convince us, that our fondness of them is not altogether founded on national prepossessions, which, however, you know to be a little strong. The translation is elegant; but I made an objection to the author, which I wish you would communicate to Mr. Gray, that we may judge of the justness of it. There appeared to me many verses in his prose, and all of them in the same measure with Mr. Shenstone's famous ballad,

Ye shepherds, so careless and free,
Whose flocks never carelessly roam, &c.

Pray ask Mr. Gray whether he made the same remark, and whether he thinks it a blemish?
Yours most sincerely.

LETTER XXIII.

JOHN DUNNING, ESQ. TO A GENTLEMAN OF THE
INNER TEMPLE.

Containing Directions to the Student.

DEAR SIR,

Lincoln's-Inn, March 3, 1779.

THE habits of intercourse in which I have lived with your family, joined to the regard which I entertain for yourself, make me solicitous, in compliance with your request, to give you some hints concerning the study of the law.

Our profession is generally ridiculed as being dry and uninteresting; but a mind anxious for the discovery of truth and information, will be amply

gratified for the toil, in investigating the origin and progress of a jurisprudence, which has the good of the people for its basis, and the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages for its improvement. Nor is the study itself so intricate as has been imagined ; more especially since the labours of some modern writers have given it a more regular and scientific form. Without industry, however, it is impossible to arrive at any eminence in practice ; and the man who shall be bold enough to attempt excellence by abilities alone, will soon find himself foiled by many who have inferior understandings, but better attainments. On the other hand, the most painful plodder can never arrive at celebrity by mere reading ; a man calculated for success, must add to native genius an instinctive faculty in the discovery and retention of that knowledge only, which can be at once useful and productive.

I imagine that a considerable degree of learning is absolutely necessary. The elder authors frequently wrote in Latin, and the foreign jurists continue the practice to this day. Besides this, classical attainments contribute much to the refinement of the understanding, and embellishment of the style. The utility of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, are known and felt by every one. Geometry will afford the most apposite examples of close and pointed reasoning ; and geography is so very necessary in common life, that there is less credit in knowing, than dishonour, in being unacquainted with it. But it is history, and more particularly that of his own country, which will occupy the attention, and attract the regard of the great lawyer.

A minute knowledge of the political revolutions and judicial decisions of our predecessors, whether in the more ancient or modern æras of our government, is equally useful and interesting. This will include a narrative of all the material alterations in the common law, and the reasons; and I would always recommend a diligent attendance on the courts of justice; as by that means the practice of them (a circumstance of great moment) will be easily and naturally acquired. Besides this, a much stronger impression will be made on the mind by the statement of the case, and the pleadings of the counsel, than from a cold uninteresting detail of it in a report. But above all, a trial at bar, or a special argument, should never be neglected. As it is usual on these occasions to take notes, a knowledge of short-hand will give such facility to your labours, as to enable you to follow the most rapid speaker with certainty and precision. Common-place books are convenient and useful; and as they are generally lettered, a reference may be had to them in a moment. It is usual to acquire some insight into real business, under an eminent special pleader, previous to actual practice at the bar: this idea I beg leave strongly to second, and indeed I have known but a few great men who have not possessed this advantage. I here subjoin a list of books necessary for your perusal and instruction, to which I have added some remarks; and wishing that you may add to a successful practice, that integrity which can alone make you worthy of it, I remain, &c. &c.

Read Hume's History of England, particularly

observing the rise, progress, and declension of the feudal system. Minutely attend to the Saxon government that preceded it, and dwell on the reigns of Edward I. Henry VI. Henry VII. Henry VIII. James I. Charles I. Charles II. and James II.

Blackstone. On the second reading turn to the references.

Mr. Justice Wright's learned Treatise on Tenures.

Coke Littleton, especially every word of Fee-Simple, Fee-Tail, and Tenant in Tail.

Coke's Institutes; more particularly the 1st and 2nd; and Serjeant Hawkins's Compendium.

Coke's Reports—Plowden's Commentary—Bacon's Abridgment; and First Principles of Equity—Pigott on Fines—Reports of Croke, Burrow, Raymond, Saunders, Strange, and Peere Williams—Paley's Maxims—Lord Bacon's Elements of the Common Law.

LETTER XXIV.

DR. ISAAC SCHOMBERG TO A LADY,

On the Method of Reading for Female Improvement.

MADAM,

CONFORMABLE to your desire, and my promise, I present you with a few thoughts on the method of reading; which you would have had sooner, only that you gave me leave to set them down at my leisure hours. I have complied with your request in both these particulars; so that you see, madam,

how absolute your commands are over me. If my remarks should answer your expectations, and the purpose for which they were intended ; if they should in the least conduce to the spending your time in a more profitable and agreeable manner than most of your sex generally do, it will give me a pleasure equal at least to that you will receive.

It were to be wished that the female part of the human creation, on whom nature has poured out so many charms with so lavish a hand, would pay some regard to the cultivating their minds and improving their understanding. It is easily accomplished. Would they bestow a fourth part of the time they throw away on the trifles and gewgaws of dress, in reading proper books, it would perfectly answer their purpose. Not that I am against the ladies adorning their persons ; let them be set off with all the ornaments that art and nature can conspire to produce for their embellishment, but let it be with reason and good sense, not caprice and humour ; for there is good sense in dress as in all things else. Strange doctrine to some ! but I am sure, madam, you know there is—You practise it.

The first rule to be laid down to any one who reads to improve, is never to read but with attention. As the abstruse parts of learning are not necessary to the accomplishment of one of your sex, a small degree of it will suffice. I would throw the subjects of which the ladies ought not to be wholly ignorant, under the following heads:—

History,
Morality,
Poetry.

The first employs the memory, the second the judgment, and the third the imagination.

Whenever you undertake to read History, make a small abstract of the memorable events, and set down in what year they happened. If you entertain yourself with the life of a famous person, do the same by his most remarkable actions, with the addition of the year and the place he was born at and died. You will find these great helps to your memory, as they will lead you to remember what you do not write down, by a sort of chain that links the whole history together.

Books on Morality deserve an exact reading. There are none in our language more useful and entertaining than the Spectators, Tatlers, and Guardians. They are the standards of the English tongue, and as such should be read over and over again ; for as we imperceptibly slide into the manners and habits of those persons with whom we most frequently converse, so reading being, as it were, a silent conversation, we insensibly write and talk in the style of the authors we have the most often read, and who have left the deepest impressions on our mind. Now, in order to retain what you read on the various subjects that fall under the head of Morality, I would advise you to mark with a pencil whatever you find worth remembering. If a passage should strike you, mark it down in the margin ; if an expression, draw a line under it : if a whole paper in the fore-mentioned books, or any others which are written in the same loose and unconnected manner, make an asterisk over the first line. By these means

you will select the most valuable, and they will sink deeper in your memory than the rest, on repeated reading, by being distinguished from them.

The last article is Poetry. The way of distinguishing good poetry from bad, is to turn it out of verse into prose, and see whether the thought is natural, and the words adapted to it; or whether they are not too big and sounding, or too low and mean for the sense they would convey. This rule will prevent you from being imposed on by bombast and fustian, which with many passes for sublime; for smooth verses which run off the ear with an easy cadence and harmonious turn, very often impose nonsense on the world, and are like your fine-dressed beaux, who pass for fine gentlemen. Divest both from their outward ornaments, and people are surprised they could have been so easily deluded.

I have now, madam, given a few rules, and those, such only as are really necessary. I could have added more; but these will be sufficient to enable you to read without burdening your memory, and yet with another view besides that of barely killing time, as too many are accustomed to do.

The task you have imposed on me, is a strong proof of your knowing the true value of time, and always having improved it to the best advantage, were there no other; and that there are other proofs, those who have the pleasure of being acquainted with you can tell.

As for my part, madam, you have done me too much honour, by singling me out from all your acquaintance on this occasion, to say any thing that

would not look like flattery ; you yourself would think it so, were I to do you the common justice all your friends allow you ; I must therefore be silent on this head, and only say, that I shall think myself well rewarded in return, if you will believe me to be, with the utmost sincerity, as I really am, madam, your faithful humble servant.

LETTER XXV.

TO COLONEL R——S, IN SPAIN.

BEFORE this can reach the best of husbands and the fondest lover, those tender names will be no more of concern to me. The indisposition in which you, to obey the dictates of your honour and duty, left me, has increased upon me ; and I am acquainted by my physicians, I cannot live a week longer. At this time my spirits fail me ; and it is the ardent love I have for you that carries me beyond my strength, and enables me to tell you, the most painful thing in the prospect of death is, that I must part with you ; but let it be a comfort to you that I have no guilt hangs upon me, no unrepented folly, that retards me ; but I pass away my last hours in reflection upon the happiness we have lived in together, and in sorrow that it is so soon to have an end. This is a frailty which I hope is so far from being criminal, that methinks there is a kind of piety in being so unwilling to be separated from a state which is the institution of heaven, and in which we have lived according to

its laws. As we know no more of the next life, but that it will be a happy one to the good, and miserable to the wicked, why may we not please ourselves at least, to alleviate the difficulty of resigning this being, in imagining that we shall have a sense of what passes below, and may possibly be employed in guiding the steps of those with whom we walked with innocence when mortal? Why may I not hope to go on in my usual work, and, though unknown to you, be assistant in all the conflicts of your mind? Give me leave to say to you, O best of men! that I cannot figure to myself a greater happiness than in such an employment; to be present at all the adventures to which human life is exposed; to administer slumber to the eye-lids in the agonies of a fever; to cover thy beloved face in the day of battle; to go with thee a guardian angel, incapable of wound or pain; where I have longed to attend thee, when a weak, a fearful woman. These, my dear, are the thoughts with which I warm my poor languid heart; but indeed I am not capable, under my present weakness, of bearing the strong agonies of mind I fall into, when I form to myself the grief you must be in upon your first hearing of my departure. I will not dwell upon this, because your kind and generous heart will be but the more afflicted, the more the person, for whom you lament, offers you consolation. My last breath will, if I am myself, expire in a prayer for you. I shall never see thy face again. Farewell for ever.

LETTER XXVI.

MR. GIBBON TO MRS. PORTEN.

Lausanne, 1756.

FEAR no reproaches for your negligence, however great: for your silence, however long. I love you too well to make you any. Nothing, in my opinion, is so ridiculous as some kind of friends, wives, and lovers, who look on no crime as so heinous as the letting slip a post without writing. The charm of friendship is liberty; and he that would destroy the one, destroys, without designing it, the better half of the other. I compare friendship to charity, and letters to alms; the last signifies nothing without the first, and very often the first is very strong, although it does not show itself by the other. It is not good-will which is wanting, it is only opportunities or means. However, one month—two months—three months—four months! I began not to be angry, but to be uneasy, for fear some accident had happened to you. I was often on the point of writing, but was always stopped by the hopes of hearing from you the next post. Besides, not to flatter you, your excuse is a very bad one. *You cannot entertain me by your letters.* I think I ought to know that better than you; and I assure you that one of *your plain sincere letters* entertains me more than the most polished one of Pliny or Cicero. 'Tis your heart speaks, and I look on your heart as much better in its way than either of their heads.

LETTER XXVII.

MR. GIBBON TO HIS FATHER.

DEAR SIR,

1760.

AN address in writing, from a person who has the pleasure of being with you every day, may appear singular. However, I have preferred this method, as upon paper I can speak without a blush, and be heard without interruption. If my letter displeases you, impute it, dear sir, only to yourself. You have treated me, not like a son, but like a friend. Can you be surprised that I should communicate to a friend, all my thoughts, and all my desires? Unless the friend approve them, let the father never know them; or at least, let him know at the same time, that however reasonable, however eligible, my scheme may appear to me, I would rather forget it for ever, than cause him the slightest uneasiness.

When I first returned to England; attentive to my future interest, you were so good as to give me hopes of a seat in parliament. This seat, it was supposed, would be an expense of fifteen hundred pounds. This design flattered my vanity, as it might enable me to shine in so august an assembly. It flattered a nobler passion; I promised myself that by the means of this seat I might be one day the instrument of some good to my country. But I soon perceived how little a mere virtuous inclination, unassisted by talents, could contribute towards that great end; and a very short examination discovered to me, that those talents had not

fallen to my lot. Do not, dear sir, impute this declaration to a false modesty, the meanest species of pride. Whatever else I may be ignorant of, I think I know myself, and shall always endeavour to mention my good qualities without vanity, and my defects without repugnance. I shall say nothing of the most intimate acquaintance with his country and language, so absolutely necessary to every senator. Since they may be acquired, to allege my deficiency in them, would seem only the plea of laziness. But I shall say with great truth, that I never possessed that gift of speech, the first requisite of an orator, which use and labour may improve, but which nature alone can bestow. That my temper, quiet, retired, somewhat reserved, could neither acquire popularity, bear up against opposition, nor mix with ease in the crowds of public life. That even my genius (if you will allow me any) is better qualified for the deliberate compositions of the closet, than for the extemporary discourses of the parliament. An unexpected objection would disconcert me; and as I am incapable of explaining to others, what I do not thoroughly understand myself, I should be meditating while I ought to be answering. I even want necessary prejudices of party and of nation. In popular assemblies, it is often necessary to inspire them; and never orator inspired well a passion, which he did not feel himself. Suppose me even mistaken in my own character; to set out with the repugnance such an opinion must produce, offers but an indifferent prospect. But I hear you say, it is not necessary that every man should enter into parliament with such exalted

hopes. It is to acquire a title the most glorious of any in a free country, and to employ the weight and consideration it gives in the service of one's friends. Such motives, though not glorious, yet are not dishonourable; and if we had a borough in our command, if you could bring me in without any great expense, or if our fortune enabled us to despise that expense, then indeed I should think them of the greatest strength. But with our private fortune, is it worth while to purchase at so high a rate, a title, honourable in itself, but which I must share with every fellow that can lay out fifteen hundred pounds? Besides, dear sir, a merchandise is of little value to the owner when he is resolved not to sell it.

I should affront your penetration, did I not suppose you now see the drift of this letter. It is to appropriate to another use the sum with which you destined to bring me into parliament; to employ it, not in making me great, but in rendering me happy. I have often heard you say yourself, that the allowance you had been so indulgent as to grant me, though very liberal in regard to your estate, was yet but small, when compared with the almost necessary extravagancies of the age. I have indeed found it so, notwithstanding a good deal of economy and an exemption from many of the common expenses of youth. This, dear sir, would be a way of supplying these deficiencies without any additional expense to you.—But I forbear.—If you think my proposals reasonable, you want no entreaties to engage you to comply with them; if otherwise, all will be without effect.

All that I am afraid of, dear sir, is that I should

seem not so much asking a favour, as this really is, as exacting a debt. After all I can say, you will still remain the best judge of my good, and your own circumstances. Perhaps, like most landed gentlemen, an addition to my annuity would suit you better, than a sum of money given at once; perhaps the sum itself may be too considerable. Whatever you shall think proper to bestow upon me, or in whatever manner, will be received with equal gratitude.

I intended to stop here; but as I abhor the least appearance of art, I think it will be better to lay open my whole scheme at once. The unhappy war which now desolates Europe, will oblige me to defer seeing France till a peace. But that reason can have no influence upon Italy, a country which every scholar must long to see: should you grant my request, and not disapprove of my manner of employing your bounty, I would leave England this autumn, and pass the winter at Lausanne, with M. de Voltaire and my old friends. The armies no longer obstruct my passage, and it must be indifferent to you whether I am at Lausanne or at London during the winter, since I shall not be at Beriton. In the spring I would cross the Alps, and after some stay in Italy, as the war must then be terminated, return home through France, to live happily with you and my dear mother. I am now two-and-twenty; a tour must take up a considerable time: and though I believe you have no thoughts of settling me soon (and I am sure I have not), yet so many things may intervene, that the man who does not travel early, runs a great risk of not travelling at all.

But this part of my scheme, as well as the whole, I submit entirely to you.

Permit me, dear sir, to add, that I do not know whether the complete compliance with my wishes could increase my love and gratitude; but that I am very sure no refusal could diminish those sentiments with which I shall always remain, dear sir, your, &c.

LETTER XXVIII.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO J. HOLROYD, ESQ.

DEAR HOLROYD,

October 6, 1771.

I sit down to answer your epistle, after taking a very pleasant ride.—A ride! and upon what?—Upon a horse.—*You lie!*—I don't.—I have got a droll little poney, and intend to renew the long forgotten practice of equitation, as it was known in the world before the second of June of the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty-three. As I used to reason against riding so I can now argue for it; and indeed the principal use I know in human reason is, when called upon, to furnish arguments for what we have an inclination to do.

What do you mean by presuming to affirm, that I am of no use here? Farmer Gibbon of no use? *Last week* I sold all my hops, and I believe well, at nine guineas a hundred, to a very responsible man. Some people think I might have got more at Weyhill fair, but that would have been an additional expense, and a great uncertainty. Our

quantity has disappointed us very much; but I think, that besides hops for the family, there will not be less than 500*l.*;—no contemptible sum off thirteen small acres, and two of them planted last year only. *This week* I let a little farm in Petersfield by auction, and propose raising it from 25*l.* to 35*l. per annum*:—and farmer Gibbon of no use!

To be serious: I have but one reason for resisting your invitation and my own wishes; that is, Mrs. Gibbon I left nearly alone all last winter, and shall do the same this. She submits very cheerfully to that state of solitude; but, on sounding her, I am convinced that she would think it unkind were I to leave her at present. I know you so well, that I am sure you will acquiesce in this reason; and let me make my next visit to Sheffield-Place from town, which I think may be a little before Christmas. I should like to hear something of the precise time, duration, and extent of your intended tour into Bucks. Adieu.

LETTER XXIX.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO MRS. GIBBON.

DEAR MADAM,

March 30th, 1775.

I HARDLY know how to take up the pen. I talked in my last of two or three posts, and I am almost ashamed to calculate how many have elapsed. I will endeavour for the future to be less scandalous. Only believe that my heart is innocent of the laziness of my hand. I do not mean to have recourse

to the stale and absurd excuse of business, though I have really had a very considerable hurry of new parliamentary business ; one day, for instance, of seventeen hours, from ten in the morning till between three and four the next morning. It is upon the whole, an agreeable improvement in my life, and forms just the mixture of business, of study, and of society, which I always imagined I should, and now find I do, like. Whether the House of Commons may ever prove of benefit to myself or country, is another question. As yet I have been mute. In the course of our American affairs, I have sometimes had a wish to speak ; but though I felt tolerably prepared as to the matter, I dreaded exposing myself in the manner, and remained in my seat, safe but inglorious. Upon the whole (though I still believe I shall try), I doubt whether nature, not that in some instances I am ungrateful, has given me the talents of an orator ; and I feel that I came into parliament much too late to exert them. Do you hear of Port Eliot coming to Bath ? and, above all, do you hear of Charles-street coming to Bentinck-street, in its way to Essex, &c. ? Adieu. Dear madam, &c.

LETTER XXX.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO THE RIGHT HON.
LADY SHEFFIELD.

Lausanne, October 28, 1783.

THE progress of my gout is in general so regular, and there is so much uniformity in the History of

its Decline and Fall, that I have hitherto indulged my laziness, without much shame or remorse, without supposing that you would be very anxious for my safety, which has been sufficiently provided for by the triple care of my friend Deyverdun, my humbler friend Caplin, and a very conversable physician (not the famous Tissot) whose ordinary fee is ten batz, about fifteen pence English. After the usual increase and decrease of the member (for it has been confined to the injured part) the gout has retired in good order, and the remains of weakness, which obliged me to move on the rugged pavement of Lausanne with a stick, or rather small crutch, are to be ascribed to the sprain, which might have been a much more serious business. As I have now spent a month at Lausanne, you will inquire with much curiosity, more kindness, and some mixture of spite and malignity, how far the place has answered my expectations, and whether I do not repent of a resolution which has appeared so rash and ridiculous to my ambitious friends? To this question, however natural and reasonable, I shall not return an immediate answer, for two reasons: 1. *I have not yet made a fair trial.* The disappointment and delay with regard to Deyverdun's house, will confine us this winter to lodgings, rather convenient than spacious or pleasant. I am only beginning to recover my strength and liberty, and to look about on persons and things; the greatest part of those persons are in the country taken up with their vintage; my books are not yet arrived, and, in short, I cannot look upon myself as settled in that comfortable way which you and I understand and relish. Yet the weather has

been heavenly, and till this time, the end of October, we enjoy the brightness of the sun, and somewhat gently complain of its immoderate heat.

2. If I should be too sanguine in explaining my satisfaction in what I have done, you would ascribe that satisfaction to the novelty of the scene, and the inconstancy of man; and I deem it far more safe and prudent to postpone any positive declaration, till I am placed by experience beyond the danger of repentance and recantation. Yet of one thing I am sure that I possess in this country, as well as in England, the best cordial of life, a sincere, tender, and sensible friend, adorned with the most valuable and pleasant qualities both of the heart and head. The inferior enjoyments of leisure and society are likewise in my power; and in the short excursions which I have hitherto made, I have commenced or renewed my acquaintance with a certain number of persons, more especially women (who, at least in France and this country, are undoubtedly superior to our prouder sex), of rational minds and elegant manners. I breakfast alone, and have declared that I receive no visits in a morning, which you will easily suppose is devoted to study. I find it impossible, without inconvenience, to defer my dinner beyond two o'clock. We have got a very good woman cook. Deyverdun, who is somewhat of an epicurean philosopher, understands the management of a table, and we frequently invite a guest or two to share our luxurious, but not extravagant repasts. The afternoons are (and will be much more so hereafter) devoted to society, and I shall find it necessary to play at cards much oftener

than in London : but I do not dislike that way of passing a couple of hours, and I shall not be ruined at shilling whist. As yet I have not supped, but in the course of the winter I must sometimes sacrifice an evening abroad, and in exchange I hope sometimes to steal a day at home, without going into company

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I have all this time been talking to lord Sheffield ; I hope that he has dispatched my affairs, and it would give me pleasure to hear that I am no longer member for Lymington, nor lord of *Lenborough*. Adieu. I feel every day that the distance serves only to make me think with more tenderness of the persons whom I love.

LETTER XXXI.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO MRS. PORTEN.

DEAR MADAM,

Lausanne, Dec. 27th, 1783.

THE unfortunate are loud and loquacious in their complaints, but real happiness is content with its own silent enjoyment ; and if that happiness is of a quiet uniform kind, we suffer days and weeks to elapse without communicating our sensations to a distant friend. By you, therefore, whose temper and understanding have extracted from human life on every occasion the best and most comfortable ingredients, my silence will always be interpreted as an evidence of content, and you would only be

alarmed (the danger is not at hand) by the too frequent repetition of my letters. Perhaps I should have continued to slumber, I don't know how long, had I not been awakened by the anxiety which you express in your last letter.

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From this base subject I ascend to one which more seriously and strongly engages your thoughts, the consideration of my health and happiness. And you will give me credit when I assure you with sincerity, that I have not repented a single moment of the step which I have taken, and that I only regret the not having executed the same design two, or five, or even ten years ago. By this time, I might have returned independent and rich to my native country ; I should have escaped many disagreeable events that have happened in the meanwhile, and I should have avoided the parliamentary life, which experience has proved to be neither suitable to my temper, nor conducive to my fortune. In speaking of the happiness which I enjoy, you will agree with me, in giving the preference to a sincere and sensible friend : and though you cannot discern the full extent of his merit, you can easily believe that Deyverdun is the man. Perhaps two persons so perfectly fitted to live together, were never formed by nature and education. We have both read and seen a great variety of objects ; the lights and shades of our different characters are happily blended, and a friendship of thirty years has taught us to enjoy our mutual advantages, and to support our unavoidable imperfections. In love and marriage, some harsh sounds will sometimes interrupt the har-

mony, and in the course of time, like our neighbours, we must expect some disagreeable moments; but confidence and freedom are the two pillars of our union, and I am much mistaken if the building be not solid and comfortable. One disappointment I have indeed experienced, and patiently supported. The family who were settled in Deyverdun's house started some unexpected difficulties, and will not leave it till the spring; so that you must not yet expect any poetical, or even historical, description of the beauties of my habitation. During the dull months of winter we are satisfied with a very comfortable apartment in the middle of the town, and even derive some advantage from this delay; as it gives us time to arrange some plans of alteration and furniture, which will embellish our future and more elegant dwelling. In this season I rise (not at four in the morning) but a little before eight; at nine, I am called from my study to breakfast, which I always perform alone, in the English style; and, with the aid of Caplin, I perceived no difference between Lausanne and Bentinck-street. Our mornings are usually passed in separate studies; we never approach each other's door without a previous message, or thrice knocking, and my apartment is already sacred and formidable to strangers. I dress at half past one, and at two (an early hour, to which I am not perfectly reconciled) we sit down to dinner. We have hired a female cook, well skilled in her profession, and accustomed to the taste of every nation; as for instance, we had excellent mince-pies yesterday. After dinner, and the departure of our company, one, two, or three

friends, we read together some amusing book, or play at chess, or retire to our rooms, or make visits, or go to the coffee-house. Between six and seven the assemblies begin, and I am oppressed only with their number and variety. Whist, at shillings or half crowns, is the game I generally play, and I play three rubbers with pleasure. Between nine and ten we withdraw to our bread and cheese, and friendly converse, which sends us to bed at eleven; but these sober hours are too often interrupted by private and numerous suppers, which I have not the courage to resist, though I practise a laudable abstinence at the best furnished tables. Such is the skeleton of my life; it is impossible to communicate a perfect idea of the vital and substantial parts, the characters of the men and women with whom I have very easily connected myself in looser and closer bonds, according to their inclination and my own. If I do not deceive myself, and if Deyverdun does not flatter me, I am already a general favourite: and as our likings and dislikes are commonly mutual, I am equally satisfied with the freedom and elegance of manners, and (after proper allowances and exceptions) with the worthy and amiable qualities of many individuals. The autumn has been beautiful, and the winter hitherto mild, but in January we must expect some severe frost. Instead of rolling in a coach, I walk the streets, wrapped up in a fur cloak; but this exercise is wholesome, and, except an accidental fit of the gout of a few days, I never enjoyed better health. I am no longer in Pavillard's house, where I was almost starved with cold and hunger, and you may be assured I now

enjoy every benefit of comfort, plenty, and even decent luxury. You wish me happy ; acknowledge that such a life is more conducive to happiness, than five nights in the week passed in the House of Commons, or five mornings spent at the Custom-house. Send me, in return, a fair account of your own situation in mind and body. I am satisfied your own good sense would have reconciled you to inevitable separation ; but there never was a more suitable diversion than your visit to Sheffield-place. Among the innumerable proofs of friendship which I have received from that family, there are none which affect me more sensibly than their kind civilities to you, though I am persuaded that they are at least as much on your account as on mine. At length madame de ***** is delivered by her tyrant's death ; her daughter, a valuable woman of this place, has made some inquiries, and though her own circumstances are narrow, she will not suffer her father's widow to be left totally destitute. I am glad you derived so much melancholy pleasure from the letters, yet had I known it, I should have withheld * * *

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LETTER XXXII.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO THE RIGHT HON.
LORD SHEFFIELD.

Lausanne, July 30, 1788, Wednesday, 3 o'clock.

I HAVE but a moment to say, before the departure of the post, that after a very pleasant journey, I

arrived here about half an hour ago ; that I am as well arranged, as if I had never stirred from this place ; and that dinner on the table is just announced. Severy I dropped at his country-house, about two leagues off. I just saluted the family ; who dine with me the day after to-morrow, and return to town for some days, I hope weeks, on my account. The son is an amiable and grateful youth ; and even this journey has taught me to know and to love him still better. My satisfaction would be complete, had I not found a sad and serious alteration in poor Deyverdun : but thus our joys are chequered ! I embrace all ; and at this moment feel the last pang of our last parting at Tunbridge. Convey this letter or information, without delay, from Sheffield-place to Bath. In a few days I shall write more amply to both places.

LETTER XXXIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Oct. 1, 1788.

AFTER such an act of vigour as my first letter, composed, finished, and dispatched within half an hour, after my landing, while the dinner was smoking on the table, your knowledge of the animal must have taught you to expect a proportionable degree of relaxation ; and you will be satisfied to hear, that for many Wednesdays and Saturdays, I have consumed more time than would have sufficed for the epistle, in devising reasons for procrastina-

nating it to the next post. At this very moment I begin so very late, as I am just going to dress and dine in the country, that I can take only the benefit of the date, October the first, and must be content to seal and send my letter next Saturday.

LETTER XXXIV.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD
SHEFFIELD.

October the 4th.

SATURDAY is now arrived, and I much doubt whether I shall have time to finish. I rose, as usual, about seven; but as I knew I should have so much time, you know it would have been ridiculous to begin any thing before breakfast. When I returned from my breakfast-room to the library, unluckily I found on the table some new and interesting books, which instantly caught my attention; and without injuring my correspondent, I could safely bestow a single hour to gratify my curiosity. Some things which I found in them insensibly led me to other books and other inquiries; the morning has stolen away, and I shall be soon summoned to dress and dine with the two Severys, father and son, who are returned from the country on a disagreeable errand, an illness of madame, from which she is, however, recovering. Such is the faithful picture of my mind and manners, and from a single day *disce omnes*. After having been so long chained to the oar, in a splendid galley indeed, I freely

and fairly enjoy my liberty as I promised in my preface; range without control over the wide expanse of my library; converse as my fancy prompts me, with poets and historians, philosophers and orators, of every age and language; and often indulge my meditations in the invention and arrangement of mighty works, which I shall probably never find time or application to execute. My garden, *berceau*, and pavilion, often varied the scene of my studies; the beautiful weather which we have enjoyed exhilarated my spirits, and I again tasted the wisdom and happiness of my retirement, till that happiness was interrupted by a very serious calamity, which took from me for above a fortnight all thoughts of study, of amusement, and even of correspondence. I mentioned in my first letter the uneasiness I felt at poor Deyverdun's declining health, how much the pleasure of my life was embittered by the sight of a suffering and languid friend. The joy of our meeting appeared at first to revive him; and, though not satisfied, I began to think, at least to hope, that he was every day gaining ground; when, alas! one morning I was suddenly recalled from my *berceau* to the house, with the dreadful intelligence of an apoplectic stroke; I found him senseless: the best assistance was instantly collected; and he had the aid of the genius and experience of Mr. Tissot, and of the assiduous care of another physician, who for some time scarcely quitted his bed-side either night or day. While I was in momentary dread of a relapse, with a confession from his physicians that such a relapse must be fatal, you will feel that I was much more to be pitied

than my friend. At length, art or nature triumphed over the enemy of life. I was soon assured that all immediate danger was passed; and now for many days I have had the satisfaction of seeing him recover, though by slow degrees, his health and strength, his sleep and appetite. He now walks about the garden, and receives his particular friends, but has not yet gone abroad. His future health will depend very much upon his own prudence; but, at all events, this has been a very serious warning; and the slightest indisposition will hereafter assume a very formidable aspect. But let us turn from this melancholy subject.—The Man of the People escaped from the tumult, the bloody tumult of the Westminster election, to the lakes and mountains of Switzerland, and I was informed that he was arrived at the Lyon d'Or. I sent a compliment; he answered it in person, and settled at my house for the remainder of the day. I have eat and drank, and conversed and sat up all night, with Fox in England; but it never has happened, perhaps it never can happen again, that I should enjoy him as I did that day, alone, from ten in the morning till ten at night. Poor Deyverdun, before his accident, wanted spirits to appear, and has regretted it since. Our conversation never flagged a moment; and he seemed thoroughly pleased with the place, and with his company. We had little politics; though he gave me, in a few words, such a character of Pitt, as one great man should give of another his rival; much of books, from my own, on which he flattered very pleasantly, to Homer and the Arabian Nights: much about the country, my garden, (which he

understands far better than I do), and, upon the whole, I think he envies me, and would do so were he minister. The next morning I gave him a guide to walk him about the town and country, and invited some company to meet him at dinner. The following day he continued his journey to Bern and Zurich, and I have heard of him by various means. The people gaze on him as a prodigy, but he shows little inclination to converse with them, &c. &c. &c. Our friend *Douglas* has been curious, attentive, agreeable; and in every place where he resided some days, he has left acquaintance who esteem and regret him; I never knew so clear and general an impression.

After this long letter I have many things to say, though none of any pressing consequence. I hope you are not idle in the deliverance of Beriton, though the late events and edicts of France begin to reconcile me to the possession of dirty acres. What think you of Necker and the States Generales? Are not the public expectations too sanguine? Adieu. I will write soon to my lady separately, though I have not any particular subject for her ear. Ever yours.

LETTER XXXV.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD
SHEFFIELD.

Lausanne, Dec. 15th, 1789.

You have often reason to accuse my strange silence and neglect in the most important of *my own af-*

fairs ; for I will presume to assert, that in a business of yours of equal consequence, you should not find me cold or careless. But on the present occasion my silence is, perhaps, the highest compliment I ever paid you. You remember the answer of Philip of Macedon : “ Philip may sleep, while he knows that Parmenio is awake.” I expected, and, to say the truth, I wished that my Parmenio would have decided and acted, without expecting my dilatory answer ; and in his decision I should have acquiesced with implicit confidence. But since you will have my opinion, let us consider the present state of my affairs. In the course of my life, I have often known, and sometimes felt, the difficulty of getting money ; but I now find myself involved in a more singular distress, the difficulty of placing it, and, if it continues much longer, I shall almost wish for my land again.

I perfectly agree with you, that it is bad management to purchase in the funds when they do not yield four pounds *per cent*.

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Some of this money I can place safely, by means of my banker here ; and I shall possess, what I have always desired, a command of cash, which I cannot abuse to my prejudice, since I have it in my power to supply with my pen any extraordinary or fanciful indulgence of expense. And so much, much indeed, for pecuniary matters. What would you have me say of the affairs of France ? We are too near, and too remote, to form an accurate judgment of that wonderful scene. The abuses of the court and government called aloud for reformation ; and it has happened, as it will

always happen, that an innocent well-disposed prince has paid the forfeit of the sins of his predecessors ; of the ambition of Lewis the Fourteenth, of the profusion of Lewis the Fifteenth. The French nation had a glorious opportunity ; but they have abused, and may lose their advantages. If they had been content with a liberal translation of our system, if they had respected the prerogatives of the crown and the privileges of the nobles, they might have raised a solid fabric on the only true foundation, the natural aristocracy of a free country. How different is the prospect ! Their king, brought a captive to Paris, after his palace had been stained by the blood of his guards ; the nobles in exile ; the clergy plundered in a way which strikes at the root of all property ; the capital an independent republic ; the union of the provinces dissolved ; the flames of discord kindled by the worst of men (in that light I consider Mirabeau) ; and the honestest of the assembly a set of wild visionaries (like our Dr. Price), who gravely debate, and dream about the establishment of a pure and perfect democracy of five-and-twenty millions, the virtues of the golden age, and the primitive rights and equality of mankind, which would lead, in fair reasoning, to an equal partition of lands and money. How many years must elapse before France can recover any vigour, or resume her station among the powers of Europe ! As yet, there is no symptom of a great man, a Richlien or a Cromwell, arising, either to restore the monarchy, or to lead the commonwealth. The weight of Paris, more deeply engaged in the funds than *all* the rest of the kingdom, will long delay a bank-

ruptcy ; and if it should happen, it will be, both in the cause and the effect, a measure of weakness, rather than of strength. You send me to Chambery, to see a prince and an archbishop. Alas ! we have exiles enough here, with the marshal de Castries and the duke de Guignes at their head ; and this inundation of strangers, which used to be confined to the summer, will now stagnate all the winter. The only ones whom I have seen with pleasure are Mr. Mounier, the late president of the national assembly, and the count de Lally ; they have both dined with me. Monnier, who is a serious dry politician, is returned to Dauphiné. Lally is an amiable man of the world, and a poet : he passes the winter here. You know how much I prefer a quiet select society to a crowd of names and titles, and that I always seek conversation with a view to amusement, rather than information. What happy countries are England and Switzerland, if they know and preserve their happiness !

I have a thousand things to say to my lady, Maria, and Louisa, but I can add only a short postscript about the Madeira. Good Madeira is now become essential to my health and reputation. May your hogshead prove as good as the last ; may it not be intercepted by the rebels or the Austrians. What a scene again in that country ! Happy England ! Happy Switzerland ! I again repeat, Adieu.

LETTER XXXVI.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO MRS. GIBBON *,
BELVIDERE, BATH.

DEAR MADAM, *Lausanne, May 18th, 1791.*

As much as I am accustomed to my own sins, I am shocked, really shocked, when I think of my long and most inexcusable silence ; nor do I dare to compute how many months I have suffered to elapse without sending a single line (Oh shame ! shame !) to the best and dearest of my friends, who indeed has been very seldom out of my thoughts. I have sometimes imagined that if the opportunities of writing occurred less frequently, they would be seized with more diligence ; but the unfortunate departure of the post twice every week encourages procrastination, and each short successive delay is indulged without scruple, till the whole has swelled to a tremendous account. I will try, alas ! to reform ; and, although I am afraid that writing grows painful to you, I have the confidence to solicit a *speedy line*, to say that you love and forgive me. After a long experience of the unfeeling doubts and delays of the law, you will probably soon hear from lord Sheffield that the Beriton transaction is at last concluded, and I hope that you will be satisfied with the full and firm security of your annuity. That you may long continue to enjoy it is the first and most sincere wish of my heart.

* His father's second wife.

In the placid course of our lives, at Lausanne and Bath, we have few events to relate, and fewer changes to describe ; but I indulge myself in the pleasing belief that we are both as well and as happy as the common order of nature will allow us to expect. I should be satisfied, had I received from time to time some indirect, but agreeable, information of your health. For myself, I have no complaint, except the gout ; and though the visits of my old enemy are somewhat longer, and more enfeebling, they are confined to my feet and knees ; the pain is moderate, and my imprisonment to my chamber, or my chair, is much alleviated by the daily kindness of my friends. I wish it were in my power to give you an adequate idea of the conveniency of my house, and the beauty of my garden ; both of which I have improved at a considerable expense since the death of poor Deyverdun. But the loss of a friend is indeed irreparable. Were I ten years younger, I might possibly think of a female companion ; but the choice is difficult, the success doubtful, the engagement perpetual, and at fifty-four a man should never think of altering the whole system of his life and habits. The disposal of Beriton, and the death of my aunt Hester, who has left me her estate in Sussex, makes me very easy in my worldly affairs : my income is equal to my expense, and my expense is adequate to my wishes. You may possibly have heard of literary projects which are ascribed to me by the public without my knowledge ; but it is much more probable that I have closed the account : and though I shall never lay aside the pleasing occupations of study, you may

be assured that I have no serious settled thoughts of a new work. Next year I shall meditate, and I trust shall execute, a visit to England, in which the Belvidere is one of my powerful loadstones. I often reflect with a painful emotion on the imperious circumstances which have thrown us at such a distance from each other.

In the moving picture of the world, you cannot be indifferent to the strange revolution which has humbled all that was high, and exalted all that was low, in France. The irregular and lively spirit of the nation has disgraced their liberty, and instead of building a free constitution, they have only exchanged despotism for anarchy. This town and country are crowded with noble exiles ; and we sometimes count in an assembly a dozen princesses and duchesses. Burke, if I remember right, is no favourite of yours ; but there is surely much eloquence and much sense in his book. The prosperity of England forms a proud contrast with the disorders of France ; but I hope we shall avoid the folly of a Russian war. Pitt, in this instance, seems too like his father. Mr. Helrard, a sensible man, and his pupil, have left us. They found, as your friends will always find, the weight of your recommendation with me. I am, dearest madam, ever most affectionately yours.

LETTER XXXVII.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO THE RIGHT HON.
LADY ***** AT FLORENCE.

Lausanne, April 4, 1793.

HAD I not given previous notice of my own unworthiness, the plea of being an old incorrigible offender would serve only to aggravate my guilt; it is still sufficiently black, and I can patiently hear every reproach, except the cruel and unjust imputation of having forgotten my fair friends of the Arno and the Tyber. They would indeed have been less present to my thoughts, had I maintained a regular *weekly* correspondence; since, by the effect of my negligence, not a *day* has elapsed without a serious, though fruitless, resolution of writing by the very next post. What may have somewhat contributed, besides original sin, to this vile procrastination, is the course of events that has filled this abominable winter. As long as the poor king's fate was on suspense, one waited from post to post, between hope and fear, and when the blow was struck even Shakspeare's language was inadequate to express our grief and indignation. I have never approved the execution of Charles the First; yet Charles had invaded, in many respects, the ancient constitution of England, and the question had been judged in the field of Naseby before it was tried in Westminster-hall.

But Louis had given and suffered every thing. The cruelty of the French was aggravated by ingratitude, and a life of innocence was crowned

by the death of a saint, or, what is far better, of a virtuous prince, who deserves our pity and esteem. He might have lived and reigned, had he possessed as much active courage as he was endowed with patient fortitude. When I read the accounts from home, of the universal grief and indignation which that fatal event excited, I indeed gloried in the character of an Englishman. Our national fame is now pure and splendid; we have nobly stood forth in the common cause of mankind; and although our armaments are somewhat slow, I still persuade myself that we shall give the last deadly wound to the Gallic hydra. The king of Prussia is likewise slow, and your poor friend the duke of Brunswick, is now not censured but forgotten. We turn our eyes to the prince of Cobourg and his Austrians, and it must be confessed, that the deliverance of Holland and Brabant from such a dragon as Dumourier, is a very tolerable employment for the month of March. These blossoms of the spring will be followed, it may be fairly hoped, by the fruits of summer; and in the meanwhile the troubles of Paris, and the revolt of the provinces, may promote, by the increase of anarchy, the restoration of order. I see that restoration through a dark cloud; but if France be lost, the rest of Europe, I believe and trust, will be saved. But amidst the hurricane, I dare not fix my eyes on the *Temple*. So much for politics, which now engross the waking and sleeping thoughts of every feeling and thinking animal. In this country we are tranquil, and I believe safe, at least for this summer; though peace has been purchased at some expense of

national honour, of the old reputation of Swiss courage; we have crouched before the tiger, and stroked him till he has sheathed his claws, and ceased for a moment to roar. My journey to England this year must depend on the events of the campaign; as I am fully resolved rather to remain quiet another autumn and winter in my sweet habitation, than to encounter the dangers of the sea and land. I envy the pleasures which you and your companions have enjoyed at Florence and Rome; nor can I decide which have tasted the most perfect delight, those to whom such beauties were new, or those to whom they were familiar. A fine eye, correct judgment, and elegant sensibility, are requisite to qualify the studious traveller; and these gifts have been liberally dispensed among the Ouchy caravan. But when you have been gratified, though not satiated, with the Hesperian prospect, to what fortunate clime will you direct your footsteps? Have we any hopes of meeting (for my journey, at all events, would be late) in the shades, or rather in the sunshine, of Ouchy? should Mount Cenis be still impervious, you have trampled on St. Bernard in a more rigorous season; and whatsoever may be the state of the world, the Pays de Vand will afford you a secure asylum, or a pleasant station. I rejoice to hear of lady Besborough's improvement. Will that new title make any difference in the plan? Is the duchess very impatient to revisit England? Except some trifling considerations of children, &c. all countries may be indifferent to her; as she is sure of being loved and admired in all. I am anxious and impatient to learn the result of

your counsels; but I feel myself unworthy of a regular correspondence, and am not desirous of heaping of fresh coals of fire on my head.

I am happy to find that you forgive and pity my friend Necker, against whom you all entertained some Versailles prejudices. As his heart has been always pure, he cannot feel remorse; but as his conduct has been unsuccessful, he is penetrated with grief and regret. Madame de Staël has written to me from England; she likes the country, but means to fly over again in May.

LETTER XXXVIII.

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ. TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD
SHEFFIELD.

Lausanne, April 27, 1793.

MY dearest friend, for such you most truly are, nor does there exist a person who obtains, or shall ever obtain, a superior place in my esteem and affection.

After too long a silence I was setting down to write, when, only yesterday morning (such is now the irregular slowness of the English post), I was suddenly struck, indeed struck to the heart, by the fatal intelligence* from sir Henry Clinton and Mr. de Lally. Alas! what is life, and what are our hopes and projects! When I embraced her at your departure from Lausanne, could I imagine

* The death of lady Sheffield.

that is was for the last time ? when I postponed to another summer my journey to England, could I apprehend that I never, never should see her again ? I always hoped that she would spin her feeble thread to a long duration, and that her delicate frame would survive (as is often the case) many constitutions of a stouter appearance. In four days ! in your absence, in that of her children ! But she is now at rest ; and if there be a future life, her mild virtues have surely entitled her to the reward of pure and perfect felicity. It is for you that I feel, and I can judge of your sentiments by comparing them with my own. I have lost, it is true an amiable and affectionate friend, whom I had known and loved above three-and-twenty years, and whom I often styled by the endearing name of sister. But you are deprived of the companion of your life, the wife of your choice, and the mother of your children ; poor children ! the liveliness of Maria, and the softness of Louisa, render them almost equally the objects of my tenderest compassion. I do not wish to aggravate your grief ; but in the sincerity of friendship, I cannot hold a different language. I know the impotence of reason, and I much fear that the strength of your character will serve to make a sharper and more lasting impression.

The only consolation in these melancholy trials to which human life is exposed, the only one at least in which I have any confidence, is the presence of a real friend ; and of that, as far as it depends on myself, you shall not be destitute. I regret the few days that must be lost in some necessary preparation ; but I trust that to-morrow

se'nnight (May the 5th) I shall be able to set forwards on my journey to England; and when this letter reaches you, I shall be considerably advanced on my way. As it is yet prudent to keep at a respectful distance from the banks of the French Rhine, I shall incline a little to the right, and proceed by Schaffouse and Studgard to Frankfort and Cologne: the Austrian Netherlands are now open and safe, and I am sure of being able at least to pass from Ostend to Dover; whence, without passing through London, I shall pursue the direct road to Sheffield-place. Unless I should meet with some unforeseen accidents and delays, I hope, before the end of the month, to share your solitude, and sympathise with your grief. All the difficulties of the journey, which my indolence had probably magnified, have now disappeared before a stronger passion; and you will not be sorry to hear, that, as far as Frankfort to Cologne, I shall enjoy the advantage of the society, the conversation, the German language, and the active assistance of Severy. His attachment to me is the sole motive which prompts him to undertake this troublesome journey; and as soon as he has seen me over the roughest ground, he will immediately return to Lausanne. The poor young man loved lady S. as a mother, and the whole family is deeply affected by an event which reminds them too painfully of their own misfortune. Adieu. I could write volumes, and shall therefore break off abruptly. I shall write on the road, and hope to find a few lines *à poste restante* at Frankfort and Brussels. Adieu; ever yours.

LETTER XXXIX.

ANNA SEWARD TO GEORGE HARDINGE, ESQ.

Lichfield, Nov. 11, 1787.

SEDUCER!—thou hast made me what I thought to have left the world without having ever been—in love with a lord. His last letter, which you enclosed, concerning his opinion on capital punishments, has fairly done the business; and I had rather be honoured with lord Camelford's amity, than with the marked attention and avowed esteem of most other of the titled sons of our land.

Lord C.'s wit, his ease, and those descriptive powers, which bring scenery to the eye with the precision of the pencil, had previously delighted me; but with the *heart*, sweetly shining out in his last epistle, I am so intemperately charmed, that his idea often fills my eyes with those delicious tears, which, beneath the contemplation of virtues that emulate what we conceive of Deity, instantaneous spring to the lids, without falling from them; tears, which are at once prompted and exhaled by pleasurable sensations. Suffer me to detain, yet a little longer, these scriptures of genius and of mercy.

And now for a little picking at our everlasting bone of contention. Hopeless love is apt to make folk cross; so you must expect me to snarl a little.

I am not to learn that there is a large mass of bad writing in Shakspeare; of stiff, odd, affected phrases and words, which somewhat disgrace him,

and would ten times more disgrace a modern writer, who has not his excuses to plead. All I contend for, and it is a point on which I have the suffrage of most ingenious men, that his best language, being more copious, easy, glowing, bold, and nervous, than that of perhaps any other writer, is the best model of poetic language to this hour, and will remain so “to the last syllable of recorded time;” that his bold licenses, when we feel that they are happy, ought to be adopted by other writers, and thus become established privileges; and that present and future English poets, if they know their own interest, will, by using his phraseology, prevent its ever becoming obsolete.

Amid the hurry in which I wrote last, my thankless pen made no comment upon the welcome information you had given, that Mr. Wyatt liked me a little. Assure yourself I like him a great deal more than a little. There’s fine style for you! Next to benevolent Virtue, thou, Genius, art my earthly divinity. To thy votaries, in every line, I look up with an awe-mixed pleasure which it is delicious to feel.

When he was first introduced to me, the glories of our Pantheon rushing on my recollection, my heart beat like a love-sick girl’s, on the sight of her innamorato:

“A diff’rent cause, says Parson Sly,
The same effect may give.”

I am glad you like Hayley’s countenance. How have I seen those fine eyes of his sparkle, and melt, and glow, as wit, compassion, or imagination had the ascendance in his mind!

Mrs. Hardinge seems to have as much wit as

yourself; the conversational ball must be admirably kept up between you. One of your characteristic expressions about her is as complete a panegyric as ever man made upon woman. "She is of all hours." If it is not in Shakspeare, and I do not recollect it there, it is like, it is worthy of his pen.

About the Herva of my friend Mathias, we are for once in unison; but you are not half so candid as I am. Ever have you found me ready to acknowledge the prosaism of many lines which you have pointed out in my most favourite poets. I sent you some of my late friend's and your idol, Davies, which you could not but feel were unclassical, and inelegant in the extreme; yet no such concession have you made to those instances.

I have frequently mentioned Cowper's Task to you; but you are invincibly silent upon that subject. Have I not reason to reproach? How should an enthusiast in the art she loves bear to see her friend thus coldly regardless of such a poet as Cowper, while he exalts Davies above a Beattie, an Hayley above the author of *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*!—for said not that friend, that no modern poet was so truly a poet as Davies?

He who can think so, would, I do believe, peruse, with delectable stoicism, a bard who should now rise up with all the poetic glories that lived on the lyres of Shakspeare and Milton. "If ye believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither shall ye be persuaded by me, though one arose from the dead;"—and so much at present for prejudice and criticism.

As for the last sentence in your letter, my friend,

I meddle not with politics;—yet confess myself delighted with our juvenile minister, of whom, I trust, we may say of his political, as well as natural life for many years to come,

“ Our young Marcellus was not born to die.”

Adieu!

LETTER XL.

ANNA SEWARD TO CAPTAIN SEWARD*.

Dec. 7, 1787.

Is it possible that lord Heathfield should not see the impropriety of my presuming to intrude upon the duke of Richmond's attention with an interference, by request, in military promotions, since I can scarcely be said to have the shadow of a personal acquaintance with his grace?

My father's present state, the almost utter loss of all his intellectual faculties, is known. Did he possess them, impertinent surely would be an acknowledgment from him, that he supposed the duke meant any thing more than a polite compliment, by giving the name of obligation to the civility of ordering our servants to make up a bed for him during three nights, and to prepare a bason of gruel for him in the morning, before he went to the field. This was literally all he could be prevailed upon to accept beneath this roof, when, in his years of bloom, he united the occupation of Mars to the form of Adonis. I was then a green

* This respectable character is still alive, and resident at Southampton.—1810.

girl, "something between the woman and the child," nor have I ever since beheld the duke of Richmond. Though I so perfectly remember *him*, it is more than probable that he remembers not me; and it would be more than impertinent to presume that I could have interest with him.

As to incurring obligations, I should be very glad thus to incur them from the duke for your advantage;—but observation, and indeed the revolt I have always myself felt from officious recommendation, invariably proved to me that it injures instead of promoting the interests of the recommended. His grace would certainly be disgusted by my seeming to suppose that any mention I could make of a relation, or friend, could operate in their favour. Disgust has a withering influence upon patronage. What is it I could say, that has a shadow of probability to enhance the duke's good opinion of a *military* man?—that man already recommended to him by lord Heathfield, the greatest general existing, whose praise ought to be the passport to martial honours and emolument. An attempt of this sort from me would be just as likely to be of use, as if, had I been in Gibraltar during the siege, and when our artillery was pouring on the enemy, I had thrown a bonfire-squib into the mouth of a forty-pounder to assist the force of the explosion.

And, lest it should be apprehended that my poetic reputation might give some degree of consequence to my request, Mr. Hayley, who is the duke's near neighbour, has told me that his grace had no fondness for works of imagination. The race of Mæcenas is extinct in this period.

When my dear father was in his better days, he lived on terms of intercourse and intimacy with the marquis of Stafford. Lord Sandwich and my father, in their mutual youth, had been on the continent together, with the affection of brothers. On my publishing the *Monody* on Andre, he desired me to present one to each of these lords, expressing an assured belief that the work of an old friend's daughter would not be unacceptable.

I, who ever thought that men of rank have seldom any taste for intellectual exertion, which serves not some purpose of their own interest; and feeling an invincible repugnance to paying attentions, which are likely to be repulsed with rude neglect, strongly, warmly, and even with a few proud tears, expostulated against the intrusion. My father never knew that great world, with which, in his youth, he had much intercourse. Frank, unsuspecting, inattentive to those nice shades of manners, those effects, resulting from trivial circumstances, which develope the human heart, he judged of others by his own ingenuous disposition. Benevolent, infinitely good-natured, and incapable of treating his inferiors with neglect, he thought every kindness, every civility he received, sincere,—every slight shown either to himself or others, accidental.

Thus he would persist in the idea that these lords would be gratified by such a mark of attention to them; and that I should receive their thanks.—I, who had been so much less in their society, knew them better; that such little great men are as capable of impoliteness as they are incapable of taste for the arts;—but my obedience was insisted upon.

One condition however I made, that, if they should not have the good manners to write, “I thank you, madam, for your poem,” he would never more request me to obtrude my compositions upon titled insolence. They had not the civility to make the least acknowledgment.

My heart (I own it is in some respects a proud one) swelled with indignation ;—not at the neglect, for I felt it beneath my attention, and had expected it, but because I had been obliged to give them reason to believe that I desired their notice.

My life against sixpence, the duke of Richmond would receive a letter from me in the same manner. Ah ! a soul like lord Heathfield’s, attentive to intellectual exertions in the closet of the studious, as in the field of honour, and generous enough to encourage, and throw around it the lustre of his notice, is even more rare than his valour and military skill. I wish his lordship to see this letter. It will explain to him the nature of those convictions, and of those feelings, which must be powerful indeed, ere I could hesitate a moment to follow his advice, though but insinuated, on any subject. My devoted respects and good wishes are his, as they are yours, not periodically, but constantly.

LETTER XLI.

ANNA SEWARD TO MISS WESTON.

Lichfield, April 15, 1783.

YOUR letter, dear Sophia, is full of entertaining matter, adorned with the wonted grace and viva-

city of your style. For the payment of such debts our little city is not responsible.

I ought, however, to speak to you of an extraordinary being who ranged amongst us during the winter, since he bears your name, amongst us little folk, I mean, for he was by no means calculated to the meridian of our pompous gentry; though, could he once have been received into their circle, they would perhaps have endured his figure and his profession, and half forgive the superiority of his talents, in consideration of his extreme fondness for every game at cards, and of his being an admirable whist-player.

The profession of this personage is music, organist of Solihull in Warwickshire; in middle life; his height and proportion mighty slender, and well enough by nature, but fidgeted and noddled into an appearance not over prepossessing; nor are his sharp features and very sharp little eyes a whit behind them in quizzity. Then he is drest—ye gods, how he is drest!—in a salmon-coloured coat, satin waistcoat, and small clothes on the same warm auroratint; his violently protruded chitterlin, more luxuriant in its quantity, and more accurately plaited, than B. B.'s itself, is twice open hemmed.

That his capital is not worth a single hair he laments with a serio-comic countenance, that would make a cat laugh—and, in that ingenuousness with which he confesses all his miserable vanities, as he emphatically calls them, he tells us that he had frizzed off the scanty crop three thousand years ago.

This loss is however supplied by a wig, for the perfection of which he sits an hour and a half every

day, under the hands of the frizzeur, that it may be plumed out like a pigeon upon steady and sailing flight—and it is always powdered with marchall,

“ Sweet to the sense, and yellow to the sight.”

A hat furiously cocked and pinched, too small in the crown to admit his head, sticks upon the extremest summit of the full-winged caxon.

His voice has a scrannel-tone—his articulation is hurried, his accent distinguished by Staffordshire provinciality; and it is difficult to stand his bow with any discipline of feature. He talks down the hours, but knows nothing of their flight; eccentric in that respect, and Parnassian in his contempt of the precision of eating-times as Johnson himself.

Now look on the other side the medal. His wit, intelligence, and poetic genius, are a mine; and his taste and real accuracy in criticism enable him to cut the rich ore they produce brilliant.

He knows of every body, and has read every thing. With a wonderfully retentive memory, and familiar with the principles of all the sciences, his conversation is as instructive as it is amusing; for his ideas are always uncommon and striking, either from absolute originality, or from new and happy combination.

His powers of mimicry, both in singing and speaking, are admirable. Nobody tells a humorous story better; but, in narrating interesting facts, his comments, though always in themselves worth attention, often fatigue by their plenitude, and by the suspense in which we are held concerning the principal events.

The heart of this ingenious and oddly compounded being, is open, ardent, and melting as even female-tenderness; and we find in it a scrupulous veracity, and an engaging dread of being intrusive. He has no vices, and much active virtue. For these good dispositions, he is greatly respected by the genteel families round Solihull, and (for his comic powers doubtless) his society is much sought after by them.

Hither while he staid in Lichfield did he often come. Indeed I found myself perpetually seduced, by his powers of speeding time, to give up more of that fast-fleeting possession to him than I could conveniently spare.

Our first interview proved, by mistake, embarrassing and ridiculous. Mr. Dewes being upon a visit to me, he and I were soberly weighing, in our respective balances, the quantity of genius that enriched the reign of Anne, and the liberal portions of it that our own times may boast.

It was evening, the grey hour, that "flings half an image on the straining sight." Comparing the dead and the living, by *other* light than that of candles, we had not called for them.

In bolts our servant Edward, who had seen as indistinctly as I was about to see. "Madam, here's young Mr. Weston,"—"Indeed!" exclaimed I, and starting up, rushed towards the personage who followed him, crying out, "Dear Joe, I am vastly glad to see you." "My name is Joseph Weston, madam." The devil it is, thought I; for the voice, and the accompanying wriggle with which he bowed very low, were not our Joe's voice or bow.

“ Lord bless me, sir,” said I, drawing back, “ I have a friend of your name, for whom, in this dusky hour, I took you.” He then told me that he had lately passed an evening with Mr. Saville, who had kindly assured him I should pardon an intrusion which had been the wish of years.

From that period, October last, Weston has been much in Lichfield, where genius and merit are, to the generality of its inhabitants, as dust in the balance against inferior station and exterior inelegance. Yet within these walls, and at our theatre this finical but glowing disciple of the muses, passed many animated hours.

He has a theatric mania upon him, in all its ardour. The inclosed very ingenuous prologue he taught Roxwell, who has a fine person and harmonious voice, to speak very delightfully.

I by no means think with you on the general abuse of the higher powers of mind, or respecting their proving injurious to the happiness of their possessor. I have generally, though not always, found, that where there is most genius there is most goodness ; and the inexhaustible sources of delight that, closed to common understandings, are open to elevated ones, must inevitably tend to give them a superior degree of happiness.

Johnson’s Tour to the Hebrides has been long much my admiration, in point of elegance, for to think with you, that the letters from Scotland, in Mrs. Piozzi’s publication, however charming are to be named with it in the strength or in graces of style.

So miss P—— can now say with Eloisa—

“ Rise Alps between us, and whole oceans roll.”^a

May the heroic spirit of this enterprise be as much for her happiness as it is to her honour!—
Adieu.

LETTER XLII.

ANNA SEWARD TO THE EDITOR OF THE GENERAL
EVENING POST.

SIR,

October 11, 1789.

THERE is a little misinformation in your account of the late Mr. Day of Anningsly. His estate, after paying his mother's jointure, which he had generously augmented, was twelve hundred per annum. He married the ingenious and amiable miss Mills of Yorkshire, whose fortune was twenty-three thousand pounds.

In his death, the indigent of his neighbourhood have an unspeakable loss—but let him be spoken of as he was, for truth is better than indiscriminate eulogium.

Mr. Day with very first-rate abilities, was a splenetic, capricious, yet bountiful misanthropist. He bestowed nearly the whole of his ample fortune in relieving the necessities of the poor; frequently, however, declaring his conviction, that there were few in the large number he fed, who would not cut his throat the next hour, if their interest could prompt the act, and their lives be safe in its commission. He took pride in avowing his abhorrence of the luxuries, and disdain of even the decencies of life; and in his person, he was generally slovenly, even to squalidness. On being asked by one of

his friends, why he chose the lonely and unpleasant situation in which he lived? he replied, that the sole reason of that choice was, its being out of the stink of human society.

It had been said, and I believe with truth, that he put a total stop to all correspondence between Mrs. Day and her large and respectable family connexions in Yorkshire, who had never ceased to regret so undeserved an instance of morose deprivation. She not only sacrificed her friends to gratify her husband's unsocial spleen, but all the comforts of that affluence to which she had been accustomed. Before this lady married our gloomy philosopher, her generosity had been eminently distinguished in the large social circle in which she moved. Society is the proper sphere of action for the benevolent virtues. It is the duty of those who possess such virtues to exert them there, that the influence of excellent example may not be lost upon mankind, through the inevitable disgust it must receive from voluntary seclusion and avowed contempt. I am, sir, &c.

LETTER XLIII.

ANNA SEWARD TO THOMAS CHRISTIE, ESQ.

July 1, 1790.

YES, my kind friend, Heaven has at length deprived me of that dear parent to whom I was ever most tenderly attached, and whose infirmities, exciting my hourly pity, increased the pangs of final sepa-

ration. It was in vain that my reason reproached the selfishness of my sorrow.

I cannot receive, as my due, the praise you so lavish upon my filial attentions. Too passionate was my affection to have had any merit in devoting myself to its duties. All was irresistible impulse. I made no sacrifices, for pleasure lost its nature and its name, when I was absent from him. I studied his ease and comfort, because I delighted to see him cheerful; and, when every energy of spirit was sunk in languor, to see him tranquil. It was my assiduons endeavour to guard him from every pain and every danger, because his sufferings gave me misery, and the thoughts of losing him anguish.

And thus did strong affection leave nothing to be performed by the sense of duty. I hope it would have produced the same attentions on my part: but I am not entitled to say that it would, or to accept of commendation for tenderness so involuntary.

It gives me pleasure that your prospects are so bright. A liberal and extended commerce may be as favourable to the expansion of superior abilities as any other profession; and it is certainly a much more cheerful employment than that of medicine. The humane physician must have his quiet perpetually invaded by the sorrows of those who look anxiously up to him for relief, which no human art can, perhaps, administer.

I have uniformly beheld, with reverence and delight, the efforts of France to throw off the iron yoke of her slavery; not the less oppressive for having been bound with ribands and lilies. Ill

betide the degenerate English heart that does not wish her prosperity.

You ask me after Mrs. Cowley. I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance—but am familiar with her ingenious writings. This age has produced few better comedies than hers.

You are very good to wish to see me in London; but I have no near view of going thither. You will be sorry to hear that I have lost my health, and am oppressed with symptoms of an hereditary and dangerous disease.

Lichfield has been my home since I was seven years old—this house since I was thirteen; for I am still in the palace, and do not think of moving at present. It is certainly much too large for my wants, and for my income; yet is my attachment so strong to the scene, that I am tempted to try, if I recover, what strict economy, in other respects, will do towards enabling me to remain in a mansion, endeared to me as the tablet on which the pleasures of my youth are impressed, and the image of those that are everlastingly absent. Adieu. Yours.

LETTER XLIV.

ANNA SEWARD TO THE REV. RICHARD SYKES.

Lichfield, October 1, 1793.

A LETTER so ingenious, so interesting, so animated, and from a friend long valued, could not but be welcome to me:—such letters cannot arrive too often, on the indulgent terms you propose; but I

am, from the accumulation of my epistolary connexions, ruined for a correspondent, since it is impossible for me to write to any individual more than once in four or five months—and what is such seldomness worth as intercourse? already is my health perceivably impaired by this employment: yet I write scarce any thing but letters, and I am reluctantly obliged to decline very flattering proposals of correspondence from new acquaintance, even of the most alluring talents, and the most engaging virtues.

Those advantages which you too generously impute to me, and term them obligations, are perhaps chiefly ideal; yet, having always believed the warm, the natural illusions of the youthful heart its best preservation against its destructive taint of indiscriminate and dispassionate sensuality—if indeed your partial opinion of me gave that more refined bias to your thoughts, your manners, and your character,—I will venture to indulge the agreeable idea, that those hours, which, in your “ambiguous years,” we passed together, were to you rather auspicious, than of baneful influence.

I esteem you for acknowledging, that the poignance of your feelings, and your poetic taste, have been sources of delight. It has ever appeared to me false and unthankful retrospect, that remembers only the pains with which nature taxes our high-wrought pleasures; that represents sensibility as an evil, and envies the sullen rest of stoicism. “Far be from me, and from my friends, such frigid philosophy!”

“With an alter’d brow,
Lours the false world, and the fine spirit grieves.

No more the morning-beams of hope illume
The faded scene. Then to ourselves we say,
Come, bright imagination come! resume
Thy orient lamp—with recompensing ray,
Shine on the mind—and pierce its gathering gloom,
With all the fires of intellectual day.”

You speak to me of your native impetuosity, and lament it as a fault. A fault, when too much indulged, it certainly must be. With you and me, that temperament is mutual, and it is real wisdom, and an owed duty, to check its excesses;—but let us not idly regret its inherence in our minds, since Rousseau has justly said—“It is that heat from which light is inseparable.” Without it, my dearest father’s endeavours would have been fruitless to inspire you with a taste for that poet*, who has but two equals in the world—for I can never believe Virgil, on any ground of equality, as a sublime original poet, with Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton.

You are ingenuous in acknowledging the errors of your temper; but there are some things which we are glad to conceal and gloss over to ourselves;—and we often shelter our indolence under complaints of our nature. Ah! Richard,—for you must allow me the habits of former days—your epitaph, which turns the other side of the medal, convinces me, that you have “hid ten talents under a napkin,” or your writings would have enriched the fanes of the British muses. It appears to me a lovely little specimen of poetic talents.

I think with you, that miss F. Cayley’s genius is considerable, while the native elegance of her taste leaves, respecting the few verses I have seen of

* Milton.

hers, young as she is, little employment for criticism. This age teems with poetic genius; but Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, where wit makes envious detraction appear just judgment, has, by inspiring a general contempt for that species of writing, destroyed poetic taste. Their admirers forget, that the very Johnson, who in them speaks so disdainfully of many of our most justly admired bards, has pronounced, in his *Rasselas*, that to write poetry well is the highest attainment of the human understanding.

The art and the artists are now fallen on evil days, and amidst minds, whose owlish darkness to its lustres is avowed and gloried in. Your climate is not, in that respect, more Bæotian than ours, or than most others. Few, who are not capable of writing poetry, take pleasure in its perusal or recitation;—and amongst those who do write verse, the jealousy of rival talents too often produces that depreciating spirit, which betrays, in its ungenerous and short-sighted policy, the common cause.

The apathy of those who do not themselves possess the gift, or have neglected its cultivation, is, in all but fools, as unnatural as it is stupid—for poetry is unquestionably the language of nature; and, as such, ought to interest and impress, where it may not be able to inspire. Our very peasants show that the seeds of poetry exist in the rude soil of their minds. Awaken their passions or excite their wonder, and you will often hear them speaking in metaphor, which is the poetic essence. Measure and rhyme are not essentials, they are only its dress. “Will the day be fine, after this

misty morning?" said I to a labourer in the Peak. "Ay, madam," replied he, "the old mountain is pulling off his nightcap."

When we inquired of the sailors, who were getting a wreck to shore, in Filey Bay, if the sea had been uncommonly violent that unfortunate night? instead of a simple affirmative, one of them exclaimed, "It rolled mountains."

When I asked the postilion, who drove me to Scarborough, and who, I found, had been a seaman, whether they were not all very happy to see the coast after a long voyage? "None but a sailor," said he, "knows the comfort of spying the first *gloom*ing of the land."

I am convinced that the poetic talent is a blessing to its possessor, and that to cultivate it habitually, is an incessant source of delight. Since you do me the honour, on miss F. Cayley's account, of consulting me on the best means of cultivation, I advise our young friend, to get by heart, at every leisure interval when she reads or walks alone, a portion of poetic writing from our best authors, observing what are those life-strokes which bring its pictures to our eye, and what the arrangement of those accents which give smoothness, and of those which energize the numbers: that the iambs give perfect melody, while the trochaics gain in spirit and picturesque effect, what they may lose in smoothness—and that to use them both, in judicious variation, completes the perfection of verse, whether blank or in rhyme. If she is not familiar with these technical terms, you will explain them to her. Here are four beautiful lines, which are all pure iambs :

" These head the troops that rocky Aulis yields,
And Eteon's hills, and Hyrie's watery fields,
Where Python, Daulis, Cyparissus, stood,
And fair Lilaea, views the rising flood."

POPE'S HOMER.

Lines where the trochaic accent chiefly prevails—

" Gnomes, how you gaz'd, when from her wounded side,
Now, where the south sea rolls its waste of tide,
Rose, on swift wheels, the moon's refulgent car,
Circling the solar orb, a sister star,
Dimpled with vales, with shining hills emboss'd,
Rolling round earth, her airless realms of frost."

DARWIN.

The above lines commence with that accent ; in the ensuing one, it prevails wholly :

" Ruin seize thee, ruthless king ;"
" Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail."

The ear will better bear the long continuance of the iambic accent, unmixed with the trochaic, especially in the ten feet couplet, than the lavish prevalence of that more animated emphasis. Perhaps Darwin's versification is too profuse of the latter. Dryden uses it too seldom. Pope seems to me to have been more judicious in the application of trochaics than Dryden in his abstinence, —than Darwin in his plenitude.

Miss Cayley will observe, that frequently to begin a line, and frequently to close one with a verb active, gives impressive strength to versification. She will feel too, the awakening power of the apostrophe and of the interrogatory style, together with the grandeur of the imperative. Also, the superiority which results from giving a passage rather in the present than in the past tense. Dryden was not sufficiently aware of this superiority ;

Pope knew it well. We may sometimes, not unhappily, slide from the past into the present tense in the same passage, but the reverse never.

She will remark, that pleasing effects are often produced by judicious discords in poetry, as well as in music—such as varying the measure, at intervals, by two syllables that should have equal emphasis, and which may be placed in any part of the line—instance :

What green cliff blossoms o'er thy place of rest,
And roams the gaunt wolf o'er the dreary plain.

A. SEWARD.

"What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn."

"Together both ere the high lawns appear'd."

MILTON.

"Shall scorn thy pale shrine glimmering near."

COLLINS.

And she will feel the frequent happiness of transposition; which, however, should not be used wantonly, and only where it may produce some picturesque or impressive effect. Darwin says,

"Loud o'er her whirling flood Charybdis roars."

Avoiding the transposition, the line had been less animated :

"O'er whirling floods Charybdis loudly roars."

Suffer me to point out one great essential towards acquiring facility in composition, viz. the writing alternately in different measures, and in great variety of measure. Self-set tasks of this sort are very useful. Choose either the eight or ten feet couplet, or the elegiac, the sonnet, or one of the various forms of the lyric, for the vehicle of

ideas, which, on arising in the mind, seem capable of appearing to advantage in the poetic dress. Lay a fine poem in the chosen measure on your table ; read it over aloud ; endeavour to catch its spirit ; observe its pauses and general construction. Thus, a young poet should compose as a student in painting paints, from the best models, not with servile minuteness, but with generous emulation and critical attention.

How far I am qualified to give these instructions may be very questionable ; but these are the habits by which I cultivated my own little poetic stock. If the harvest has been tolerably competent, it is to them that I am indebted for the produce. Dr. Darwin tells people he never read or studied poetry. The assertion is demonstrably affected and untrue, from the artful accuracy and studied resplendence of his style ; and I know, that through all the years he lived at Lichfield, he was in the habit of amusing a great part of his leisure hours by the most sedulous study of this exalted science, and by very critical attention to the poetic writings of others.

If Shakspeare's talents were the miracles of uncultured intuition, we feel, that neither Milton's, Pope's, Akenside's, Gray's, or Darwin's, were such, but that poetic investigation, and long familiarity with the best writers in that line, co-operated to produce their excellence. What folly, then, of the wise, is a disengenuousness so glaring !

I hope your Masonic week at Westella proved pleasanter than such periods have generally proved with that prond miser of his intellectual wealth. Your application of the adversity-passage in Shak-

speare to him, is one of the happiest I have known. It comes within Johnson's definition of wit, or, perhaps, he would more properly have termed it genius: "The bringing those things together, between which there is no natural relationship, but of which, when brought into contact, every one perceives the fitness." I give the meaning, not the words of the passage, which have escaped my memory.

I wrote to Mr. Hayley lately. My letter contained a jocular passage to the following effect: "One of my Yorkshire friends, a gentleman of considerable talents, conversing twice this summer, at Derby, with Mrs. Hayley, returned to us on the coast, enchanted with her wit and spirit. He thinks it impossible the effervescing cordial should ever cloy. If you could contrive to make his wife, who is a very fine woman, elope with you, there might be a double divorce, and he would certainly marry Mrs. Hayley. Pray, if the hymeneal chain has galled you a little, would not that be a much pleasanter way of dissolving it, than that it should be broken by the dark hand of the shapeless despot?" Now, if there were an atom of seriousness in all this, what admirable morality it would be! I have not yet answered the letter you were so good to bring me from Mrs. Hayley. When I do, she shall certainly know how high she stands in your esteem.

My health is not at Lichfield what it was on the coast. I begin to fear the good effects of my journey, and watery discipline, will not be lasting. With the mists of these autumnal mornings and evenings, my difficulty of breathing has returned.

I thank you and dear Mrs. R. Sykes for persisting in an idea so pleasing to me, as the inclusion of Lichfield in your next summer's tour; nor less kind do I take the mutual wish you express to see me again your guest. Remembrance of the social pleasures I tasted in Yorkshire, must form a powerful spell to lure me thither again; and the days I passed in your pleasant mansion were not the least interesting of that agreeable excursion.

What a length of letter! I feel it less difficult to be silent to those I love, than to speak to them briefly. Say the kindest things for me to the numerous branches of the Westella family, as well as within that house of my long love,

“Where oft for me the cheerful morning rose.”

LETTER XLV.

ANNA SEWARD TO MRS. HAYLEY.

Lichfield, Oct. 5, 1793.

IN reading your last agreeable letter, my dear madam, I felt extremely glad to see you acknowledge that the summer was passing pleasantly. It is too seldom that people express a conscious enjoyment of the present. While regret is busy with the past, and expectation with the future, *ennui* usurps the place of cheerfulness, and thinks coldly of the social, and yawns through the studious hour. You are happy in a sprightlier temperament, and grateful in confessing the pleasure it affords you.

Glad also am I to find that my old friend, Mr.

R. Sykes, stands so high in your good graces. His wit and worth deserve that honour. He desires me to assure you of his esteem and best wishes, and of his fervent desire to converse with you often. I wrote to the dear bard lately, and rallied him upon the intenseness with which Sykes expresses his delight in your imagination, and in the gaiety of your spirit.

While surrounded at Bridlington by those beloved beings of the Westella house, we all formed a very pleasing intimacy with Mr. and Mrs. John Gisbon. He has the kind of disposition, the species of talents, which I should most desire in the person I wish to call friend. The fair Millicent has been very fortunate.

“ She did not blunt on fops her beauty’s dart,
But boasts the triumph of a letter’d heart :”

And I perceive, on intimacy, a gentleness and goodness about her, which promises to deserve the blessings of her lot, and to secure his happiness who chose her.

Yesterday brought me an odd, though ingenious letter, from a Mr. Geary of Leominster, of whom, except one or two former letters on literary subjects, I know nothing. His last exhorts me to vindicate miss Hannah More’s character from the malevolent aspersions which, he says, Mrs. Smith has cast upon it in her novel, *Desmond*, under the title of *Mrs. Manby*.

I have not read *Desmond*, and this is the first hint that has reached me of any such attack. If it is so, Mrs. Smith has done very unwisely, as well as unjustly ; but Hannah More wants no cham-

pion; her virtues and talents stand far above the reach of such senseless calumny :

“ Which will pass by her as the idle wind,
Which she respects not.”

Have you read Helen Williams's new publication? It is finely written, and infinitely interesting; but I tremble for her life in that murderous city, from the bold truth this work contains in testimony against those detestable Jacobins. It is to be regretted that she is not, by this time, more aware that anarchy, with all its tyrannous mischiefs, must result from the prevalence of democratic influence.

You would be sorryish to hear, that poor Moll Cobb, as Dr. Johnson used to call her, is gone to her long home. If you saw the ridiculous, puffing, hyperbolic character of her in the public papers, it would make you stare and smile at the credence due to newspaper portraits. Those, however, who draw them in colours so false and glaring, are very reprehensible. This was the disgrace of a pen capable of far better things than such a tribute of gross and mean flattery to the vanity of the surviving relation. Its author well knew the uniform contempt with which Johnson spoke both of the head and heart of this personage, well as he liked the convenience of her chaise, the “ taste of her sweetmeats and strawberries,”
* and the idolatry of her homage.

Nauseous, therefore, was the public and solemn

* See his Letters to Mrs. Piozzi: letters the 114th and 134th.

mention of Johnson's friendship for Mrs. Cobb, of whose declaration respecting her, in a room full of company here, the panegyrist had so often heard—"How should," exclaimed Johnson, "how should Moll Cobb be a wit! Cobb has read nothing, Cobb knows nothing; and where nothing has been put into the brain, nothing can come out of it to any purpose of rational entertainment." Somebody replied,—Then why is Dr. Johnson so often her visitor?—"O! I love Cobb—I love Moll Cobb for her impudence."

The despot was right in his premises, but his conclusion was erroneous. Little has had been put into Mrs. Cobb's brain, much of shrewd biting and humourous satire was native in the soil, and has often amused very superior minds to her own. Of that superiority, however, Dr. Johnson excepted, she had no consciousness; her ignorance and self-sufficiency concealed it effectually. She was a very selfish character, nor knew the warmth of friendship nor the luxury of bestowing. Thus has her monumental wall been daubed by very untempered mortar indeed. Yet, to her we may apply what Henry V. says of Falstaff,—

" We cou'd have better spar'd a better man ;
O! we shou'd have a heavy miss of thee,
If we were much in love with vanity."

Adio !

LETTER XLVI.

ANNA SEWARD TO MISS SYKES.

Litchfield, June 30, 1795.

I HAVE been impatient of this involuntary delay, in acknowledging a letter, pathetic, interesting, and kind as your last;—in assuring you of the sympathetic concern which often arises, as memory presents this lamented deprivation.

“ O! human life, how mutable! how vain!
How thy wide sorrows circumscribe thy joys!”

Alas! the affliction I so sincerely pity, must long descend upon the tomb, where hopes like yours lie blasted. I know what I should myself have felt, had my now long-lost Honora been torn from our arms in the first bloom of her youth;—had her resembling talents and graces thus suddenly perished. I am comforted that your venerable parents’ waning strength, sunk not totally under the unexpected stroke. Surely your county is more subject to putrid diseases, that sweep through whole families, than ours; particularly of the throat, to which so many of the Wakefields were victims; and by which, autumn twelvemonth, the house of Westella was so near sustaining a still heavier loss; an event which, while it must have darkened the remainder of your parents’ days, would have absolved *you* from your share of their present woe, and precluded the melancholy sweetness of comforting them under it.

As to the tender love-tale, interwoven with your pathetic narration, you judged rightly in feeling assured that it would interest me; that I should admire the conduct of your father, and love your charming brother, for the sacrifices he is making of ambition and interest, to pity, gratitude, and affection. I cannot think these sacrifices were a duty—but so much less as they were duties, so much more are they generosity. May every happiness ensue and reward the virtue!

I am afresh obliged by the kind wishes of yourself and family, to see me amongst you this summer;—by the gratifying exception in my favour, which dear Mr. Sykes makes beneath his averseness to society, out of the pale of his own numerous connexions;—by the friendly summons of Mr. and Mrs. R. Sykes to their hospitable board; but extrinsic circumstances combine with the arbitrary demands of impaired health, to counteract those wishes that point my course to the Humber.—Coz. T. White and his bride-elect make a prodigious point of my attending them to church, and sitting with the bride to receive her company. By this event I shall be detained at home till the latter end of July, and must then go to some of those medical springs which my complaints require: else, be assured I long to see you all again; and that to mingle my sighs with yours more increases that longing than could any prospect of participated amusement.

Surely, dear miss Sykes, you have shrunk with horror from the ten-times trebled cruelties of the Bastile, which have brought the poor dauphin to the grave, and which must soon destroy his inno-

cent sister. The old government, at some seldom times, confined in the dreadful solitudes of that prison, individuals who had rendered themselves politically obnoxious—but those unhappy sufferers were kept clean, and at least allowed to sleep in peace. The unoffending royal little ones were not only condemned to languish in solitude and darkness, but their bodies left to perish by slow disease, the certain and torturing consequence of loathsome filth. From month to month, none came to smooth their bed or to give them clean linen, but their food was conveyed to them through holes in the walls, and amidst the accumulated nastiness of a never-opened cell!—their sleep disturbed every hour or two, through the comfortless night, from being obliged, at the imperious call of the brutal sentinels, to run naked to those holes, to show that neither death had delivered them from their base oppressors, nor aristocratic stratagem exchanged them for other children.

Never, never was human nature so demonized as in those vile French, authorising, under every set of democratic rulers, such unprovoked and utterly useless barbarity. While the monsters, who now hold the reins of unorganized government, were anathematizing their fellow-monsters, the fallen party, for cruelty, themselves were exerting a still more infamous degree of it, upon the sweet innocent children of their too-indulgent, their murdered king.

That such detestable and impious wretches are not permitted to be crushed, rendered a warning to other nations, and an awful example of the chastisement of an outraged deity, seems incom-

prehensible; but God, in his own time, will punish these blasphemous and cruel republicans, and avenge the injured in the sight of men and angels.

As to the present measures of this country, I am sorry to say I think them as impolitic and rash as you can do. Persisting in a war originally just, but now become hopeless, we seem to forget that there is a God to punish the wicked, without our waste of blood and treasure in a desperate cause. Unwarned by the consequence of our first criminally extravagant loan to Prussia, its repetition to the emperor in times like these, with exhausted resources, and an impending famine, in my opinion, deserves and calls loudly for the impeachment of those, whose callous insensibility to the sufferings of their country, have dared to bring it forward.

“ O Pitt! thou long-refulgent star,
That roll'd the nation's azure car
Through blissful climes, where olives strew'd the way,
How art thou fallen, thou son of light,
How fallen from thy meridian height,
Who saidst, The distant lands shall bear me and obey!”

I was in hopes a fine summer would have succeeded that wild winter which so long shook forth its waste of horrors, pregnant with more than common mischiefs:—but here is the longest day past, and we are yet shivering by our fires, without having obtained scarce a week in which the biting east has not generally howled.

This is the period of inconceivable characters, as well as of unexpected and prodigious events. The modern Thalestris is now in this city, made-

moiselle le chevalier D'Eon, exhibiting, for two shillings admittance, her skill in the art of attack and defence with the single rapier.

Melancholy reverse of human destiny! what a humiliation for the aid-de-camp of marshal Broglie!—for the ambassador, during five years, from the court of France to that of Russia!—for the envoy to ours, and the principal planner and negociator of the peace of 1782!—In the German war, she lived five years in camps and tented fields, amidst the pride, the pomp, and circumstance of high trust and glorious contest. In the American war, she was in five battles, fought against general Elliot, and received six wounds;—and all this before her sex was discovered.

I learned from herself, that a destiny so astonishing, was not originally the result of voluntary choice. Her parents bred her up as a boy, to avoid losing an estate entailed on the heir-male.

She seems to have a noble, independent, as well as intrepid, mind; and the muscular strength and activity of her large frame at sixty-nine, are wonderful. She fences in the French uniform, and then appears an athletic, venerable, graceful man. In the female garb, as might be expected, she is awkwardly though not vulgarly masculine.

In three days she was to have sailed for France, by the order of the late unfortunate monarch, to have resumed her male dress, and to have taken military command as general, when the massacre at the Thuilleries, and imprisonment of the king, lamentably frustrated that design, and probably dropped an eternal curtain over her career of glory. Adieu! adieu.

LETTER XLVII.

FROM MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

South-street, Dec. 17, 1796.

I RECEIVED, a few days ago, your obliging letter, together with the very beautiful book which accompanied it. The dedication of such an edition of such an author is highly gratifying to me ; and to be mentioned in such a manner, by a person so thoroughly attached to the principles of liberty and humanity, as you, sir, are known to be, is peculiarly flattering to me. I am, with great regard, sir, your obedient, humble servant,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER XLVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, Monday.

I RECEIVED, on Saturday, the second volume of Lucretius, together with a pamphlet of yours upon Porson's Hecuba, for which I beg leave to return you my thanks. I had received, some time since, your letter announcing to me the present of the Lucretius ; but delayed answering it till I got the book, which my servant had not then an opportunity of sending me, lest there might be some mis-

take, from your mentioning Park-street, instead of South-street, for my residence.

* * * * *

I feel it to be unpardonable in me to take advantage of your civility in sending me your books, to give you all this trouble ; but I could not refuse myself so fair an opportunity of getting my doubts upon these passages cleared.

* * * * *

I am, with great regard, sir, your most obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER XLIX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, Friday.

I RECEIVED yesterday your very obliging letter, for which I return you many thanks, as well as for the Bion and Moschus, which I will tell my servant to take an early opportunity of sending down to me.

* * * * *

I am very sorry more encouragement has not been given to your Lucretius ; but I am willing to flatter myself that it is owing to many people not choosing to buy part of a work till the whole is completed. Both the Latin and Greek elegiac verses, in the beginning of the second volume, have given me great satisfaction ; but I should fear the inferior rank which you give to our own country will not generally please ; and certainly, in

point of classical studies, or poetry, to which the mention of Apollo naturally carries the mind, we have no reason to place the French above us. I am with great regard, sir, your obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER L.

FROM MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR, *St. Anne's Hill, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 1798.*

I HAVE received the third volume of your magnificent and beautiful Lucretius, for which I take the earliest opportunity of returning you my thanks. I cannot help flattering myself that, now the work is complete, it will be far more patronized than it has hitherto been: but it must be allowed that these times are not favourable to expensive purchases of any kind; and I fear, also, that we may add, that the political opinions we profess are far from being a recommendation to general favour, among those, at least, in whose power it is to patronize a work like yours.

I am at present rather engaged in reading Greek; as it is my wish to recover, at least, if not to improve my former acquaintance (which was but slight) with that language: but it will not be long before I enter regularly upon your Lucretius; and when I do, if I should find any difficulties which your notes do not smooth, I shall take the liberty of troubling you for further information; presuming upon the obliging manner in which you

satisfied some doubts of mine upon a former occasion. I am, with great regard, sir, your obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, Feb. 2, 1798.

IT is an instance of my forgetfulness, but I really thought I had acknowledged the receipt of the publications which you were so good as to send me. Excepting the Pope, which I have not yet looked into, I read the rest with great pleasure; and quite agree with you, that Bryant has made no case at all upon the subject of the Trojan war. I cannot refuse myself taking this opportunity of asking your opinion relative to the 24th Iliad. whether or not it is Homer's? If it is, I think the passage about Paris and the goddesses must be an interpolation; and if it is not, by denying Homer the glory of Priam's expedition from Troy and interview with Achilles, we take from him the most shining passages, perhaps, in all his works. I am, sir, your obedient humble servant,

C. J. FOX.

P.S. Though I have not begun to read Lucretius regularly, yet I have *dipped* in it sufficiently to have no apprehension of quoting the line of Phædrus. I think the elegiac verses to the poet are very classical and elegant indeed; and, you

know, we Etonians hold ourselves (I do not know whether or not others agree with us) of some authority in matters of this sort.

LETTER LII.

FROM MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, Feb. 16, 1798.

I SHOULD have been exceedingly sorry, if, in all the circumstances you mention, you had given yourself the trouble of writing me your thoughts upon Homer's poetry; indeed, in no circumstances, should I have been indiscreet enough to make a request so exorbitant: in the present, I should be concerned if you were to think of attending even to my limited question respecting the authenticity of the 24th Iliad, or to any thing but your own business.

I am sorry your work is to be prosecuted; because though I have no doubt of a prosecution failing, yet I fear it may be very troublesome to you. If, either by advice or otherwise, I can be of any service to you it will make me very happy; and I beg you to make no scruple about applying to me: but I do not foresee that I can, in any shape, be of any use, unless it should be in pressing others, whom you may think fit to consult, to give every degree of attention to your cause. I suppose there can be little or no difficulty in removing, as you wish it, the difficulty from the

publisher to yourself? for to prosecute a printer who is willing to give up his author, would be a very unusual, and certainly a very odious, measure.

I have looked at the three passages you mention, and am much pleased with them: I think "curalium," in particular, a very happy conjecture; for neither "cœruleum" nor "beryllum" can, I think, be right; and there certainly is a tinge of red in the necks of some of the dove species. After all, the Latin words for colours are very puzzling: for, not to mention "purpura," which is evidently applied to three different colours at least—scarlet, porphyry, and what we call purple, that is, amethyst, and possibly to many others—the chapter of Aulus Gellius to which you refer has always appeared to me to create many more difficulties than it removes; and most especially that passage which you quote, "*virides equos*." I can conceive that a poet might call a horse "*viridis*," though I should think the term rather forced; but Aulus Gellius says, that Virgil gives the appellation of "*glanci*," rather than "*cœrulei*" to the *virides equos*, and consequently uses *virides*, not as if it were a poetical or figurative way of describing a certain colour of horses, but as if it were the usual and most generally intelligible term. Now, what colour usual to horses could be called *viridis*, is difficult to conceive; and the more so, because there are no other Latin and English words for colours which we have such good grounds for supposing corresponding one to the other as *viridis* and *green*, on account of grass, trees, &c. &c. However, these are points which may be discussed by us, as you say, at leisure, if

the system of tyranny should proceed to its maturity. Whether it will or not, I know not; but, if it should, sure I am that to have so cultivated literature as to have laid up a store of consolation and amusement, will be, in such an event, the greatest advantage (next to a good conscience) which one man can have over another. My judgment, as well as my wishes, leads me to think that we shall not experience such dreadful times as you suppose possible; but, if we do not, what has passed in Ireland is a proof, that it is not to the moderation of our governors that we shall be indebted for whatever portion of ease or liberty may be left us. I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LIII.

FROM MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, Feb. 23, 1798.

NOTHING, but your stating yourself to be in some degree at leisure now, could justify my troubling you with the long and, perhaps, unintelligible scrawl which I send with this. I most probably have shown much ignorance, and certainly some presumption, in seeming to dispute with you, upon points of which you know so much, and I so little: all I can say in my defence is, that disputing is sometimes a way of learning.

I have not said any thing yet upon the question which you seem to have thought most upon—

whether the Iliad is the work of one, or more authors? I have, for the sake of argument, admitted it; but yet, I own, I have great doubts, and even lean to an opinion different from yours. I am sure the inequality of excellence is not greater than in "Paradise Lost," and many other poems written confessedly by one author. I will own to you, also, that in one only of the instances of inequality which you state, I agree with you. Até is detestable; but I cannot think as you do of the death of Hector. There are parts of that book, and those closely connected with the death of Hector, which I cannot help thinking equal to anything.

It is well for you that my paper is at an end and that I have not the conscience to take a new sheet. Your humble servant, C. J. FOX.

LETTER LIV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, March 16, 1798.

* * * * *

I am very much concerned at your Lucretius meeting with so little encouragement as you say; and I feel the more, because I cannot help thinking that part of the prejudice which occasions so unaccountable a neglect, is imputable to the honour you have done me by the dedication of it—

an honour, I assure you, that I shall always most highly value. I am, sir, yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LV.

MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, March 1, 1799.

ALTHOUGH I am wholly without any resources, even of advice, and much more of power, to offer you my services upon the present occasion; yet I cannot help troubling you with a few lines, to tell you how very sincerely concerned I am at the event of your trial.

The liberty of the press I considered as virtually destroyed by the proceedings against Johnson and Jordan; and what has happened to you I cannot but lament therefore the more, as the sufferings of a man whom I esteem, in a cause that is no more.

I have been reading your Lucretius, and have nearly finished the second volume: it appears to me to be by far the best publication of any classical author; and if it is an objection with some persons, that the great richness and variety of quotation and criticism in the notes takes off, in some degree, the attention from the text, I am not one of those who will ever complain of an editor for giving me too much instruction and amusement. I am, with great regard, and all possible good wishes, sir, your most obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LVI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, June 9, 1799.

NOTHING could exceed the concern I felt at the extreme severity (for such it appears to me) of the sentence pronounced against you.

I should be apprehensive, that the distance of Dorchester must add considerably to the difficulties of your situation; but should be very glad to learn from you that it is otherwise.

If any of your friends can think of any plan for you, by which some of the consequences of your confinement may be in any degree lessened, I should be very happy to be in any way assisting in it. From some words that dropped from you, when I saw you, I rather understood that you did not feel much inclination to apply to your usual studies in your present situation; otherwise it had occurred to me, that some publication, on a less expensive plan than the *Lucretius*, and by subscription, might be eligible, for the purpose of diverting your mind, and for serving your family; but of this you are the best judge: and all I can say is, that I shall always be happy to show the esteem and regard with which I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

Rev. GILBERT WAKEFIELD,
King's Bench Prison.

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LVII.

MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, June 10, 1799.

WITHIN a few hours after I wrote to you yesterday, a gentleman called, who informed me that a scheme had been formed for preventing some of the ill consequence of your imprisonment, and upon a much more eligible plan than that which I suggested. Of course, you will not think any more of what I said upon that subject; only that, if you do employ yourself in writing during your confinement, my opinion is, that, in the present state of things, literature is, in every point of view, a preferable occupation to politics.

I have looked at my Roman Virgil, and find that it is printed from the Medicean MS. as I supposed. The verses regarding Helen, in the second book, are printed in a different character, and stated to be wanting in the MS. Yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, June 12, 1799.

I RETURN you your friend's letter, which gave me great satisfaction. The sentence upon lord Thanet and Ferguson is, all things considered, most abominable; but the speech accompanying it is, if possible, worse.

I think a Lexicon in Greek and English is a

work much wanted ; and, if you can have patience to execute such a work, I shall consider it a great benefit to the cause of literature. I hope to hear from you that your situation at Dorchester is not worse, at least, than you expected ; and, when I know you to be in a state of perfect ease of mind (which at this moment could not be expected), I will, with your leave, state to you a few observations, which I just hinted to you when I saw you, upon Porson's note to his Orestes, regarding the final *v*. I am, with great regard, sir, yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LIX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, June 27, 1799.

IN consequence of a letter which lord Holland showed me, I have written to lord Shaftesbury and to lord Ilchester, who are both very humane men, and would, I should hope, be happy to do any thing that may make your situation less uneasy. I am, sir, yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

No. 11, Sackville-street, Sept. 14, 1799.

I ASSURE you I take very kindly your letter and the quotation in it.* I think the question of

* Mr. Wakefield, in the preceding letter (not inserted here) had expressed his notion that field sports, in the exercise of

‘How far field sports are innocent amusements?’ is nearly connected with another, upon which, from the title of one of your intended works, I suspect you entertain opinions rather singular; for if it is lawful to kill tame animals with whom one has a sort of acquaintance, such as *fowls, oxen, &c.* it is still less repugnant to one’s feelings to kill wild animals: but then to make a *pastime* of it—I am aware there is something to be said upon this point. On the other hand, if example is allowed to be any thing, there is nothing in which all mankind, civilized or savage, have more agreed, than in making some sort of chase (for fishing is of the same nature) part of their business or amusement. However, I admit it to be a very questionable subject: at all events, it is a very pleasant and healthful exercise. My wound goes on, I believe, very well: and no material injury is apprehended to the hand; but the cure will be tedious, and I shall be confined in this town for more weeks than I had hoped ever to spend days here. I am much obliged to you for your inquiries, and am, sir, your most obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

one of which Mr. F. had wounded his hand, were amusements unworthy of a *man of letters*; and in confirmation of it, had quoted a passage from Cicero, in which that great man says that in his *secession* from public life, and his disgust with men in power, he gave himself up neither to chagrin, nor to pleasures unworthy of a man of letters! *indignis homine docto voluptatibus*. Cicero speaks here, in *general*, of pleasures unworthy of a learned man; but does not hint at *field sports* or specify any sort of amusement in the passage quoted. It evinced great good temper in Mr. Fox not to show any irritation at Mr. W.’s reflection upon him, which, to say the least of it, was apparently ill-mannered.

LETTER LXI.

MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, Oct. 22, 1799.

I BELIEVE I had best not continue the controversy about field sports ; or at least, if I do, I must have recourse, I believe, to authority and precedent, rather than to argument, and content myself with rather excusing, than justifying them. Cicero says, I believe, somewhere, “*Si quem nihil delectaret nisi quod cum laude et dignitate conjunctum foret, . . . huic homini ego fortasse, et pauci, Deos propitios, plerique iratos putarent.*” But this is said, I am afraid, in defence of a libertine, whose public principles, when brought to the test, proved to be as unsound, as his private life was irregular. By the way, I know no speech of Cicero’s more full of beautiful passages than this is (*pro M. Cælio*), nor where he is more in his element. Argumentative contention is what he by no means excels in ; and he is never, I think, so happy, as when he has an opportunity of exhibiting a mixture of philosophy and pleasantry ; and especially when he can interpose anecdotes, and references to the authority of the eminent characters in the history of his country. No man appears, indeed, to have had such real respect for authority as he ; and therefore, when he speaks on that subject, he is always natural and in earnest ; and not like those among *us*, who are so often declaiming about the wisdom of our ancestors, with-

out knowing what they mean, or hardly ever citing any particulars of their conduct, or of their *dicta*.

I showed your proposed alteration in the *Tristia* to a very good judge, who approved of it very much. I confess, myself, that I like the old reading best, and think it more in Ovid's manner; but this, perhaps, is mere fancy. I have always been a great reader of him, and thought myself the greatest admirer he had, till you called him the first poet of antiquity, which is going even beyond me. The grand and spirited style of the *Iliad*; the true nature and simplicity of the *Odyssey*; the poetical language (far excelling that of all other poets in the world) of the *Georgics*, and the pathetic strokes in the *Æneid*, give Homer and Virgil a rank, in my judgment, clearly above all competitors; but next after them I should be very apt to class Ovid, to the great scandal, I believe, of all who pique themselves upon what is called purity of taste. You have somewhere compared him to Euripides, I think; and I can fancy I see a resemblance in them. This resemblance it is, I suppose, which makes one prefer Euripides to Sophocles; a preference which, if one were writing a dissertation it would be very difficult to justify.

* * * * *

I cannot conceive upon what principle, or indeed from what motive, they have so restricted the intercourse between you and your family. My first impulse was, to write to lord Ilchester to speak to Mr. Frampton; but as you seem to suspect that former applications have done mischief, I shall do nothing. Did you, who are such a hater of war, ever read the lines at the beginning of the

second book of Cowper's Task? There are few things in our language superior to them, in my judgment. He is a fine poet, and has, in a great degree, conquered my prejudices against blank verse. I am, with great regard, sir, your most obedient servant,

C. J. FOX.

My hand is not yet so well as to give me the use of it, though the wound is nearly healed. The surgeon suspects there is more bone to come away.—I have been here something more than a fortnight.

LETTER LXII.

MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, April 5, 1801.

I AM exceedingly concerned to hear of the loss you have sustained, as well as of the additional suffering which your family has experienced (as of course they must), from your separation from them during so trying a calamity.

You mentioned to me before, your notion of reading lectures upon the Classics, but not as a point upon which you had fully determined. If I can be of any use in promoting your views, I will not fail to do so: for in proportion as classical studies are an enjoyment to myself (and they are certainly a very great one), I wish them to be diffused as widely as possible.

* * * * *

Yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LXIII.

MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, April 13, 1801.

I AM much obliged to you for your letter; and found immediately, from Kuster's index, the passage in question. It is in a note upon *Ἰππεις*, v. 1365. The verses you refer to in the 5th *Æneid* are indeed delightful; indeed I think that sort of pathetic is Virgil's great excellence in the *Æneid*, and that in that way he surpasses all other poets of every age and nation, except, perhaps (and only perhaps), Shakspeare. It is on that account that I rank him so very high; for surely to excel in that style which speaks to the heart is the greatest of all excellence. I am glad you mention the eighth book as one of those you most admire. It has always been a peculiar favourite with me. Evander's speech upon parting with his son is, I think, the most beautiful thing in the whole, especially the part from v. 574; and is, as far as I know, wholly unborrowed. What is more remarkable is that it has not, I believe, been often attempted to be imitated. It is so indeed in Valerius Flaccus, lib. i. v. 323, but not, I think, very successfully.

Dum metus est, nec adhuc dolor——

goes too minutely into the philosophical reason to make with propriety a part of the speech. It might have done better as an observation of the poet's, in his own person; or still better, perhaps, it would have been, to have left it to the reader.

The passage in Virgil is, I think, beyond any thing.

Sin aliquem infandum casum —

is nature itself. And then the tenderness in turning towards Pallas,

Dum te, care puer ! &c.

In short, it has always appeared to me divine. On the other hand, I am sorry and surprised, that, among the capital books, you should omit the fourth. All that part of Dido's speech that follows,

Num fletu ingemuit nostro ? —

is surely of the highest style of excellence, as well as the description of her last impotent efforts to retain Æneas, and of the dreariness of her situation after his departure.

I know it is the fashion to say Virgil has taken a great deal in this book from Apollonius ; and it is true that he has taken some things, but not nearly so much as I had been taught to expect, before I read Apollonius. I think Medea's speech, in the fourth Argonaut, v. 356, is the part he has made most use of. There are some very peculiar *breaks* there, which Virgil has imitated certainly, and which I think are very beautiful and expressive : I mean, particularly, v. 382 in Apollonius, and v. 380 in Virgil. To be sure, the application is different, but the manner is the same : and that Virgil had the passage before him at the time, is evident from what follows :

——Μνησαιο δε και ποτ' εμοιο,
στρευγομενος καματοισι,

compared with

Supplicia hausurum scopulis, et nomine Dido
Sæpe vocaturum. —

It appears to me upon the whole, that Ovid has taken more from Apollonius than Virgil.

I was interrupted as I was writing this on Sunday; and have been prevented since, by company, from going on.

I have dwelt the longer upon Virgil's pathetic, because his wonderful excellence in that particular has not in my opinion, been in general sufficiently noticed. The other beauties of the eighth Æneid, such as the rites of Hercules, and the apostrophe to him, both of which Ovid has so successfully imitated in the beginning of the fourth Metamorphosis; the story of Cacus; the shield; and, above all, the description of Evander's town, and of the infancy of Rome, which appears to me, in its way, to be all but equal to the account of Alcinoüs in the Odyssey, have been, I believe, pretty generally celebrated; and yet I do not recollect to have seen the eighth book classed with the second, fourth, and sixth, which are the general favourites. I am, with great regard, sir, yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

LETTER LXIV.

MR. FOX TO MR. WAKEFIELD.

SIR,

St. Anne's Hill, April 28, 1801.

I AM much obliged to you for your caution about Heyne's Virgil; and if I purchase it at all, I will

wait for the new edition. When I was a book buyer, in my younger days, it was not in existence ; and lately I have bought but few classical books, except Greek ones; and some Latin authors, of whom I had before *no* valuable edition. I had once a good many editions of Virgil; but having had frequent occasions to make presents, and Virgil being always a proper book for that purpose, I have now only the fine Roman one, in three volumes folio; a school Delphin; a Variorum; and Martyn's Georgics. I am glad to find that you are not the heretic about the fourth book that I suspected you to be. Your notion, in respect to poets borrowing from each other, seems almost to come up to mine, who have often been laughed at by my friends as a systematic defender of plagiarism: indeed, I got lord Holland, when a school-boy, to write some verses in praise of it; and, in truth, it appears to me, that the greatest poets have been most guilty, if guilt there be, in these matters. Dido is surely far superior to Medea in general. Your observation on the utility of communications upon these subjects may possibly be the cause of my making many trifling ones upon them. The loss of the older Roman writers is certainly the greatest that could have happened to philology; and probably, too, on account of their own merit, is in every view a considerable one. Of the more modern writers whom you mention, I have never read any but A. Gellius. I bought Apuleius last year, with an intention to read him, but something or other has always prevented me. I never saw one quotation from Tertullian that

did not appear to me full of eloquence of the best sort ; and have often thought, on that account, of buying an edition of him : but have been rather discouraged, from supposing that it might be necessary to know more than I do of the controversies in which he was engaged, to relish him properly.

With respect to your lectures, I should think that Latin would succeed better than Greek authors ; but this is very uncertain. From the audience, however, which you may have upon the first, it will not be difficult to collect what probability there is of getting as good, or a better one, to the second.

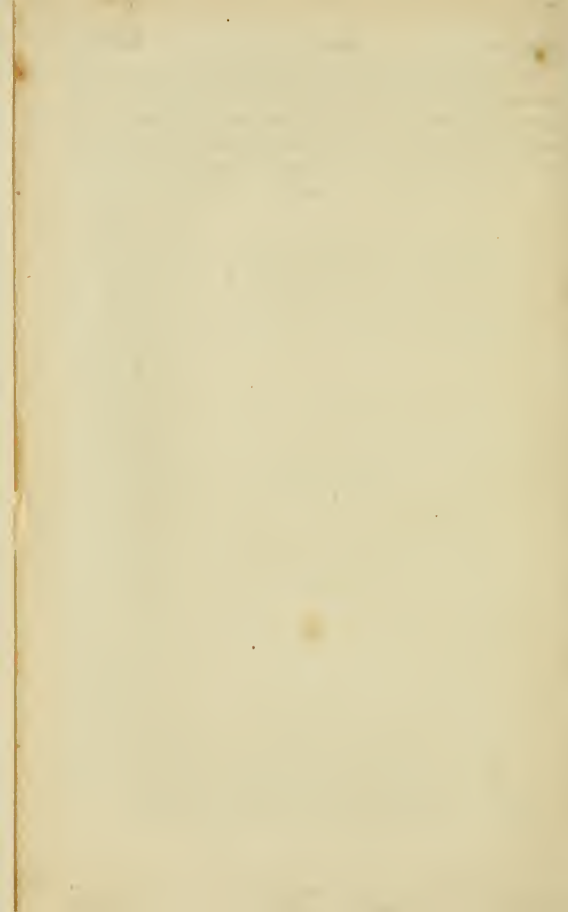
It would be very good in argument, to state the inefficacy of the petitions on the slave trade, in the way you mention ; and I do believe, that, in fact, the supposed inefficacy of petitions has been one of the great causes of the supineness, or rather lethargy, of the country : but it is not true, that petitions, though they have been ultimately unsuccessful, have been therefore wholly inefficacious. The petitions in 1797 produced, as Mr. Pitt says (and I suspect he says truly), the negociation at Lisle : no great good, you will say ; but still they were not wholly inefficacious. And even with regard to the slave trade, I conceive the great numbers which have voted with us, sometimes amounting to a majority, have been principally owing to petitions. Even now, in this last stage of degradation, I am not sure that if the people were to petition generally (but it must be very generally) that it would be without effect.

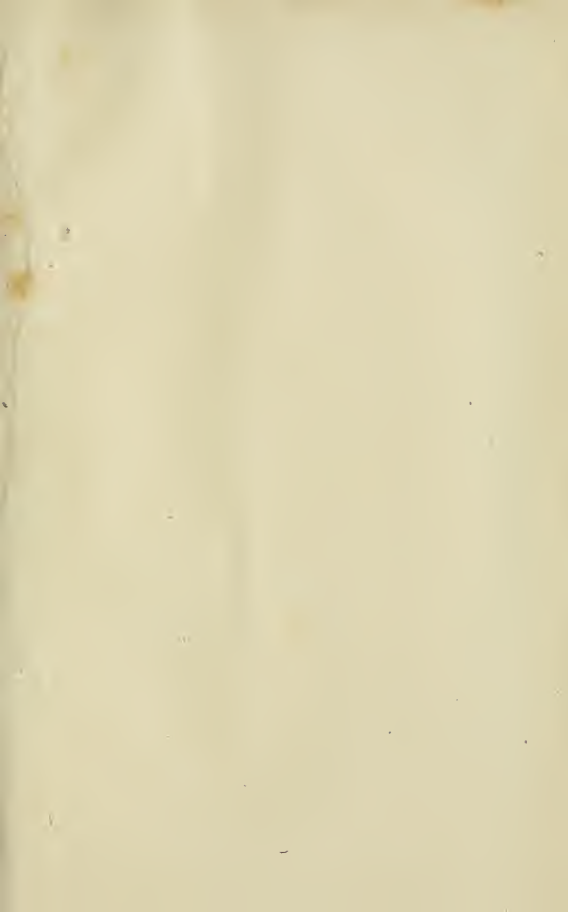
Your attention to the unfortunate wretches you speak of* must do you the highest honour, in the eyes of all men, even of tory justices; and that is saying (a bold word) *θαρσαλεον επος*. Yours ever,

C. J. FOX.

* His fellow prisoners.

THE END.

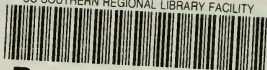




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